

Leave of Absence

Friday, September 15, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 15, 2000

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to advise that apart from those people who have already got leave of absence from this House, I have received communication from the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro who is ill and has asked to be excused for the next 28 days. The leave of absence which he seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago US\$250 million 9.75 per cent notes due 2020. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 30 year Japanese Yen equivalent of US \$100 million private placement—final terms and conditions. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
3. Report of the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
4. Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

JOINT SELECT COIMMITTEE REPORT

**CHILDREN'S (AMDT.) BILLS
(Presentation)**

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to consider and report on the Children's Authority Bill, 1999; The Children (Amdt.) Bill, 1999; The Adoption of Children Bill, 1999; the Miscellaneous Provisions (Children) Bill, 1999; and the Children's Community Residences, Foster Homes and Nurseries Bill, 1999.

SPECIAL REPORT
(PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE)
(Presentation)

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the table:

The Special Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Report by the Auditor General as requisitioned under section 9(5) of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01 on the Investment of Twelve Million Six Hundred Thousand Dollars by the Tobago House of Assembly during 1998.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
(Award of Contract)

89. Mr. Barendra Sinanan (*San Fernando West*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister state:

- (i) whether the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago or any person or company appointed by or associated with the Port Authority had entered into any negotiations and/or contract with the intention of leasing a ferry to operate the shipping service between Port of Spain and Scarborough during the period 1996 to date or is in the course of entering into such negotiations and/or contract?
- (ii) what is the status of such negotiations and/or contract and whether there has been any arbitration proceedings and award of damages for breach of contract against the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago in such arbitration proceedings?
- (iii) the amount of award against the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago?
- (iv) whether any payment has been made pursuant to such award and to whom payable?

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, in 1997, the *Mf Panorama* became due for dry docking for the purposes of remedial works, so as to maintain its class with Lloyd's Register and continue operating as a fully insured passenger ferry. The authority considered the situation and decided that it would be necessary to enter into a time charter of a suitable Ro-Ro Ferry for a period of two months in

order to satisfy the capacity requirements of the Government Shipping Service during the Panorama's absence.

The authority communicated this recommendation to the Ministry of Works and Transport on April 28, 1997. Soon after, a team comprising of a representative of the authority and a member of the Coast Guard—on behalf of the Ministry of Works and Transport—carried out on-site inspections of several vessels short-listed for charter by the Port Authority. On their return, the team recommended to the Port Authority that of the vessels inspected, the most appropriate in terms of specifications, was the M. V. Stena Nautica operating out of Sweden and owned by Stena Nautica Line Limited.

The Port Authority proceeded on its own accord to enter into negotiations with the line on June 3, 1997. Negotiations were geared towards the finalization of a charter party contract and for facilitating the earliest possible sailing and delivery time of the vessel. During the negotiations, it became clear that the prospect of such a charter had assumed a larger, financial proportion, as Stena Nautica was offering their vessel for a minimum of four months. As a result, the final proposed charter fee was approximately TT \$8 million.

The Port Authority Tenders Committee gave their approval to the charter of the line on July 12, 1997. On the 13th, the authority wrote to the Ministry of Works and Transport, indicating that negotiations for the replacement ferry were about to be completed and the vessel was ready for release. Such release, however, was contingent on the Government confirming its status as charterer to the line in the form of a letter stating as follows—

“This is to confirm that the Port Authority is acting as the Agent of the charterers, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to the Time Charter of the Stena Nautica.”

At no point in time did the Ministry of Works and Transport authorize the Port Authority to conduct any negotiations for a replacement ferry on its behalf, up to that time. When the authority communicated the decision of its Tender Committee to the Government in July, this was the first time that any information had been communicated to the Ministry in regard of a decision to charter and the cost involved.

It became necessary to meet with the authority on July 17, 1997, and indicate to them that the TT\$8 million cost that was asked for by Stena Nautica for a charter of a four-month period was unacceptable. The Port was asked to consider other options for the replacement of the Panorama. Stena Nautica Line Limited

was informed by the authority that the Government was not willing to give the confirmation it sought, and that there were to be no more negotiations.

Stena Nautica subsequently communicated to the Government, their view that as far as they were concerned, they were always in negotiations with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; who had entered into and was legally bound by a fully negotiated charter party. Stena Nautica further reserved their rights to claim loss and damages as a result of Government's last minute breach.

On September 9, 1997, Stena Nautica, through their attorneys, invoked the arbitration clause of the charter. In papers filed they listed both the authority and the Government as parties, and took the position that the party with whom they were dealing was ultimately the Government, as was evident in the many faxes and communications between the parties.

1.40 p.m.

The faxes and communications referred to were between the Port Authority brokers and Stena Nautica brokers. At no point in time did the Government, through the Ministry of Works and Transport or otherwise, communicate or negotiate directly with Stena Nautica Line Limited. The Government found itself with little option but to retain counsel and contest the matter together with the Port Authority.

Papers were exchanged and a date was ultimately set for October 7, 1998, for an arbitration hearing at the New Arbitration Centre, London. The arbitrator was to be Mr. Kenneth Rokinson, Q.C. Attorneys for the Government and the Authority, the United Kingdom firm of Charles Russell, solicitors, advised that although no formal document was ever signed, an arbitrator would more than likely rule that a contract did exist and, therefore, advised that the Government and the Port Authority should settle the matter by way of lump sum payment.

On October 7, 1998 the arbitration began as scheduled, however, there was no representation at the initial hearing by Government or the Port Authority. This was because at this time a late offer from Stena Nautica Line Limited was being considered, that they, Stena, would accept a lump sum payment of US \$2 million in full and final settlement of all claims.

Charles Russell advised the Attorney General that in the circumstances, this was the more advisable course of action. On October 8, the second day of the arbitration, Charles Russell communicated to Stena's attorneys, the Government and the Port Authority's offer of US \$2 million, in full and final settlement of all

claims. This was accepted by Stena Nautica Line Limited on the same day, thus ending all proceedings.

There was no formal arbitration award against the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, however, the sum of \$2 million inclusive of interest and cost was offered in full and final settlement by the Government and the Port Authority, and accepted by Stena Nautica Line Limited. In addition to this claim, it was further necessary to pay the cost of retention of arbitrator Mr. Kenneth Rokinson, Q.C, M. J. Kusel and Company (the New Arbitration Centre) and the legal fees of Charles Russell, solicitors who acted on behalf of the state in this matter.

The sum of TT \$13,208,183.59 was paid through the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to Stena Nautica Line Limited, the arbitrator, Mr. Kenneth Rokinson, Q.C, M. J. Kusel and Company, and Charles Russel, solicitors through separate instalments in December 1998 and February 1999 respectively.

**Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
(Payment of Moneys)**

90. Mr. Barendra Sinanan (*San Fernando West*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister of Works and Transport state whether there were any payments made or agreed to be made by the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to any person or company as a fee or commission for obtaining a ferry to operate the shipping service between Trinidad and Tobago, and if so to whom and in what amount?

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, there were no payments made or agreed to be made by the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to any person or company as a fee or commission for obtaining a ferry to operate a shipping service between Trinidad and Tobago.

**PRIVY COUNCIL
(JUDGMENT)**

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I wish refer to the judgment of the Privy Council delivered last Tuesday 12, September, in the appeals of Neville Lewis and others and the Attorney General of Jamaica. These were the appeals of six men who had been convicted of murder in Jamaica and sentenced to death. The appeals raised important questions under provisions of the Constitution of Jamaica, which resemble very closely provisions of our Constitution.

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It was thus clear that the outcome of the appeals would influence the constitutional position in this country, and I was given leave by the Privy Council to intervene and be represented at the hearing. For the same reasons the Attorney General of The Bahamas has also been given such leave.

Mr. Speaker, I was particularly concerned about one question raised. This question relates to the commutation by the President of sentences of death passed by the courts. The penalty for murder is death, that is the law, and the law provides no exceptions. However, the Head of State always had power to avert the operation of the law by commuting a sentence of death to a sentence of life imprisonment. In colonial days this power was exercised by the Governor on behalf of the Sovereign.

Under the Constitution it is now exercised by the President in accordance with the advice of the Minister of National Security. Before advising the President the minister is obliged, himself, to obtain the advice of the advisory committee on the power of pardon, but he is not obliged to act in accordance with that advice.

The action of the minister in advising the President has always been regarded as an exercise of his discretion and not in any sense a quasi-judicial act. It has not, therefore, been open to review or challenge in the courts. The same has applied to the action of the advisory committee in advising the minister. The courts have had no part in deciding whether the sentence of death should be carried out; that is not a question for the court, but a question for the absolute discretion of the minister.

Mr. Speaker, this view of the law was adopted by the unanimous judgment of the Privy Council in the case of *de Freitas vs. Benny* in 1976. An attempt to reopen the question was made in a case from The Bahamas, *Reckley vs. the Minister of Public Safety* in 1996, but the Privy Council again by a unanimous decision reaffirmed its earlier judgment. So the law appeared to be settled until this week.

In the appeals of Lewis and others the Privy Council was asked again to reopen the question. This time, by a majority of four to one they have reversed the earlier unanimous decisions. They now hold that the power of commutation must be exercised not simply in a manner prescribed by Constitution, but also I quote from the judgment of the majority:

“by procedures which are fair and proper and to that end are subject to judicial review.”

So for the first time, the exercise of the power of mercy is made subject to challenge in the courts.

Mr. Speaker, this discretion of the minister in deciding the procedure to be followed is apparently to be controlled by the views of the judges. A decision of the minister that the law must take its course and the sentence of death be carried out may thus become subject to the processes of litigation and appeal from court to court.

Mr. Speaker, there has so far been only limited time for consideration of this judgment, but I have had an opportunity of discussing it and its implications with the lawyers in London who acted for the state in the Privy Council. My present view is that if the requirements now imposed by the Privy Council are met, the process of reaching a decision about commutation is likely to become so complicated, so extended and prolonged that it would be impossible to carry out the sentence of death in a constitutional way. This prospect, obviously, raises a serious problem.

The elected government has the ultimate responsibility of maintaining the public peace, security and the rule of law. If further consideration confirms my present view, we shall have to consider what action that responsibility obliges us as a government to take in light of the new view of law now taken by the Privy Council.

The dissenting judge in the Lewis case, Lord Hoffman, stated in his judgment the following words, and I quote:

“But the power of final interpretation of a Constitution must be handled with care. If the Board [referring to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council] feels able to depart from a previous decision simply because its members on a given occasion have a ‘doctrinal disposition to come out differently’, the rule of law itself will be damaged and there would be no stability in the administration of justice in the Caribbean.”

This Government had anticipated that some of these problems may have arisen, and introduced a Constitution (Amdt.) Bill to prevent, among other things, the abuse of court process in death penalty matters. This Bill needed the support of the Opposition, but the Opposition voted against the measure.

Parliament has the power to permit the death penalty laws of Trinidad and Tobago to be carried outside by preventing the convicted persons from abusing the processes of the court in an effort to frustrate the state from carrying out the death penalty. The Parliament can also ensure that all the necessary safeguards of due process of law are complied with so that fair trials are had and just appeal processes are guaranteed. If appropriate laws are not passed, the death penalty

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may not be able to be carried out in Trinidad and Tobago in light of the majority decision of the Privy Council in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I can say no more. I shall make a further statement when the Government has decided what course it must take, but the problem I have been discussing is not only the problem raised by this judgment. The Privy Council has also departed from its earlier decisions on other points, and those too would require careful consideration.

Thank you.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, we shall be doing Motion No. 3 first. We have communicated the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order for the time frame fixed.

Agreed to.

PROVISIONAL COLLECTION OF TAXES ORDER

The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion:

Whereas it is provided by subsection (1) of section 3 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act, Chap. 74:01 (hereinafter called 'the Act') that where proposals for general or supplementary appropriation of public funds are made to the House of Representatives and are embodied in an Appropriation or Supplementary Appropriation Bill, the President may, for the purpose of raising revenue to meet the expenditure specified in any such Bill, by Order, provide for the imposition of a tax or the variation of an existing tax and from the date of the publication of the Order in the Gazette, the tax as imposed or varied shall be payable;

And whereas it is provided by subsection (5) of section 3 of the Act that an Order varying an existing tax shall cease to have effect if the Order is not confirmed with or without modifications, by a resolution agreed to by the House within the next twenty-one days after the commencement of the Order;

And whereas the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 was made under section 3 of the Act, whereby provision was made for the variation of taxes in the written laws mentioned in the said Order to the extent and in the manner set out therein;

And whereas it is expedient to confirm the said Order:

Be it resolved that the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 be confirmed subject to the following modifications:

1. Paragraph 2 amended by deleting section 103A(1) and substituting as follows:

‘103A(1) Notwithstanding any written law to the contrary, but subject to subsection (2), there shall be a waiver of the following liabilities:

- (a) interest on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable for the years of income up to and including the year 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (b) interest charged on the payment, prior to 28th August, 2000, of taxes and business levy due and payable for the years of income up to and including the year 1999, where such interest has not been paid;
 - (c) penalties, further tax and additional tax incurred on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable for the years of income up to and including the year 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (d) penalties, further tax and additional tax in respect of taxes and business levy due and payable for years of income up to an including the year 1999 and paid prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties, further tax and additional tax have not been paid;
 - (e) penalties on outstanding returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 where such returns are filed during the period August 28, 2000 to April 30, 2001;
 - (f) Penalties with respect to returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 and filed prior to August 28, 2000 where such penalties have not been paid.
- (2) The waiver granted in this section shall not apply to the following:
- (a) the relevant taxes and business levy;
 - (b) remainder of taxes and business levy for the year of income 1999 payable on or before 30th April, 2000;
 - (c) interest, penalties, further tax and additional tax paid prior to 28th August, 2000.
- (3) Where any returns, taxes and business levy remain outstanding after 30th April, 2001, the penalties, interest, further taxes and additional taxes

which would have been payable on such returns, taxes and business levy shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.’.

2. Paragraph 4 is amended by deleting section 54A(1) and substituting as follows:

‘54A(1) Notwithstanding any written law to the contrary, but subject to subsection (2), there shall be a waiver of the following liabilities:

- (a) interest on outstanding taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
- (b) interest charged on the payment, prior to 28th August, 2000, of taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such interest has not been paid;
- (c) penalties and penal taxes incurred on outstanding taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
- (d) penalties and penal taxes in respect of taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 and paid prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties and penal taxes have not been paid.

(2) The waiver granted in subsection (1) does not apply to the following:

- (a) the relevant taxes;
- (b) interest, penalties and penal taxes paid prior to 28th August, 2000.

(3) Where any taxes remain outstanding after 30th April, 2000, the interest, penalties and penal taxes which would have been payable on such outstanding taxes shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.’.

3. The following paragraph is inserted:

‘Act No. 14
1987
amended

5. The Finance Act is amended by inserting in the Schedule in appropriate numerical position, the following number: ‘103A’.’’

Mr. Speaker, the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order commenced on August 28, 2000, and would, therefore, need to be confirmed by September 18,

2000. As is evident, I am well within the timeframe given for confirmation of the Order.

Our successes on the economic front have been due, in large measure, to the emphasis we have placed on fiscal integrity. The projections for growth, unemployment and inflation are also predicated on the realization of anticipated revenues mainly through a system of taxation.

Our medium-term policy objective is to strengthen revenues primarily through the simplification of the tax base and through continuous improvements in the tax administration. *[Interruption]* We have already made significant strides in improving the administration of the tax system. We are also reinforcing the competency of the Inland Revenue Division via a technical service agreement with the United States Internal Revenue Services.

We are improving operational efficiency by greater use of computerized processes. The new structure of the Inland Revenue Division will feature the following: a centralized tax processing centre; a large case and specialty audit section; an automated pay-as-you-earn system; integration of the value added Tax and pay-as-you-earn; an income tax processing system; and a criminal investigation section.

The streamlining of the tax administration system was advanced even further in the 2001 budget with the expansion of the number of salaried persons who will not be required to file tax returns. In keeping with the streamlining of the tax administration process with effect from income year 2001, all individuals earning salaried income only would not be required to file income tax returns with the Board of Inland Revenue.

1.55p.m.

The improved performance of the division will necessitate increased compliance and strengthen revenue collections. In the year 2001, the Inland Revenue Division will be able to accept T.D. 4 certificates in an electronic format and reconciliation of payments in a given year of income, with T.D. 4 summaries being done automatically.

Firms which have not reconciled their payments will be targeted for investigation by the Board of Inland Revenue. To this end, 100 temporary tax officers will be engaged to support the board in strengthening its investigative and managing capabilities. Additionally, the overall coverage of the tax system will be enhanced significantly as previously defaulting taxpayers could take the initiative

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not only to satisfy outstanding obligations, but will now be willing for an expanse in the tax system. The success of these initiatives, however, is seriously threatened by the demands being placed on the board's resources from defaulting taxpayers and in the determination of long outstanding queries.

In order to provide a one-off opportunity to certain taxpayers to bring their status up-to-date, an eight month concession to defaulting taxpayers is now in effect. This concession takes the form of a waiver of interest, penalties, further taxes, additional taxes and penal taxes where the defaulting taxpayers file outstanding returns and pay outstanding taxes by April 30, 2001.

Taxpayers with liabilities in respect of income tax, corporation tax, value added tax and business levy due as at December 31, 1999 and which are still outstanding will benefit from this concession.

The proposals contained in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order 2000, which is the subject of the resolution before this House will have immediate and significant impact. In the final analysis, it is far better to start with a clean slate than to pursue a course of action in which the proverbial candle will cost more than the funeral.

The concessions articulated in the Budget Statement did not cover the situation where a taxpayer filed his return, or paid his taxes and business levy prior to August 28, 2000 but still has outstanding penalties and interests. It is now proposed to extend the concession to unpaid penalties and interests in respect of outstanding taxes and business levy which have already been paid in full prior to August 28, 2000. The concession will, however, not apply to cases where penalties and interests were paid prior to August 28, 2000.

Apart from the unpaid penalties and interests, I also propose to extend the concession to the health surcharge. Payment of the health surcharge was usually done at a time when income tax was paid over to the Board of Inland Revenue. As such, non-payment of health surcharge incurs similar interests and penalties as with income tax. Administrative difficulties may arise where taxpayers come during the period of concession to pay outstanding taxes and benefit from the waiver granted without being granted concession with respect to health surcharge. The concession is therefore to be extended to the health surcharge and will benefit employers who are required to deduct the health surcharge and remit the same over to the Board of Inland Revenue.

Mr. Speaker, to reinforce concession measure and to promote compliance, the interest payable on outstanding taxes will be increased from 15 per cent to 20 per

cent with effect from May 01, 2000. I will be proposing further modifications to the resolution as follows:

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| Section 103 A(1) | B. In paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) delete the words ‘for the years of income up to and including the year 1999’ and substitute the words ‘as at 31 st December, 1999.’ |
| Section 103A(1)(a) | The words ‘or is’ are to be inserted before the words ‘paid during the period August 28, 2000.’ |
| Section 103A(2) | C. Insert the words ‘For the avoidance of doubt’. |
| Section 103A(2)(a) | D. Delete the words ‘the relevant’ |
| Section 103A(2)(b) | E. Delete and renumber paragraph (c) accordingly. |
| Section 54A(2) | A. Insert the words ‘For the avoidance of doubt’ at the beginning of the sentence. |
| Section 54A(2)(a) | B. Delete the words ‘the relevant’. |
| Section 54A(3) | C. Delete the word ‘2000’ and substitute the word ‘2001’. |

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the new paragraph 5 to be inserted in the order in relation to the health surcharge concession., the word “1987” should be inserted after the words “Finance Act”.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: I would just point out that in moving, you have to move the entire thing including the amendment. I suggest you do it, that would be the correct course.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: As advised, before I beg to move, I want to go over again the list of amendments that I had mentioned.

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| “1 | A. Delete the words ‘by inserting after section 103, the following section’ and substitute as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) in section 103(1) and (2) by deleting the word ‘15’ and substituting the word ‘20’; and |
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(b) by inserting after section 103, the following section:

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| Section 103A(1) | B. In paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) delete the words 'for the years of income up to and including the year 1999' and substituting the words 'as at 31 st December, 1999.'" |
| Section 103A(1)(a) | The words 'or is' are to be inserted before the words 'paid during the period August 28, 2000.' |
| Section 103A(2) | C. Insert the words 'For the avoidance of doubt' at the beginning of the sentence. |
| Section 103A(2)(a) | D. Delete the words 'the relevant'. |
| Section 103A(2)(b) | E. Delete and renumber paragraph (c) accordingly. |
| Section 54A(2) | A. Insert the words 'For the avoidance of doubt' at the beginning of the sentence. |
| Section 54A(2)(a) | B. Delete the words 'the relevant'. |
| Section 54A(3) | C. Delete the word '2000' and substitute the word '2001'. |

Mr. Speaker, under paragraph 1A, I also wish to put on the record that the rate of interest referred to subsection (3) shall come into effect on May 01, 2001. I beg to move.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to put what you had, but I think for clarification I want to point out that this talks about amendments at the committee stage. There is no committee stage and this is why it is necessary for everything to go in your moving.

You had also referred to 1 A. (b). I have some difficulty with that.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, there is going to be a (b) and a (c). There is going to be 1A subsection (b) and (c) and presently...

Mr. Speaker: This (c) that you are putting in should be what?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I have 1A and under A, I have (a) and (b).

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I see (b).

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: I am going to have (a), (b) and (c).

Mr. Speaker: What is (c)?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Subsection (c) should read.

“By inserting after...

Mr. Speaker: One second, I am writing it.

2.10 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, let me go it over. After (a), (b) will read:

“The rate of interest referred to in subsection (3) shall come into effect on 1st May, 2001.”

Mr. Speaker: Could you go slowly because I have to put it.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: “The rate of interest referred to in subsections (1) and (2) shall come into effect on 1st May, 2001.”

Mr. Speaker: Is that it?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: No. What I had as (b) is now (c).

Mr. Speaker: Just one other thing. In section 54(a)(3), the Finance Act—you actually said it—what appears on the Order Paper is that the Finance Act is amended by inserting—but you want to put in something between “Act” and “is.” Don’t you? Do you want to put in 1987?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether we could consider adjourning the House. I find this rather embarrassing in the face of the public gallery. I suggest that we adjourn and allow the Government to get its house in order.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, the following paragraph is inserted:

“Act No. 14
1987 amended

5. The Finance Act, 1987, is amended by inserting in the Schedule in appropriate numerical position, the following number: ‘103A’”.

Mr. Speaker: The Motion is:

Whereas it is provided by subsection (1) of section 3 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act, Chap. 74:01 (hereinafter called “the Act”) that where proposals for general or supplementary appropriation of public funds are made to the House of Representatives and are embodied in an Appropriation or Supplementary Appropriation Bill, the President may, for the purpose of raising revenue to meet the expenditure specified in any such Bill, by Order, provide for the imposition of a tax or the variation of an existing tax and from the date of the publication of the Order in the Gazette, the tax as imposed or varied shall be payable;

And Whereas it is provided by subsection (5) of section 3 of the Act that an Order varying an existing tax shall cease to have effect if the Order is not confirmed with or without modifications, by a resolution agreed to by the House within the next twenty-one days after the commencement of the Order;

And Whereas the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 was made under section 3 of the Act, whereby provision was made for the variation of taxes in the written laws mentioned in the said Order to the extent and in the manner set out therein;

And Whereas it is expedient to confirm the said Order:

And Whereas notice is given that it is the intention of the Government to do the following:

1. Paragraph 2 is amended:
 - (a) in section 103(1) and (2) by deleting the word ‘15’ and substituting the word ‘20’;
 - (b) by inserting after section 103(2), the following subsection:

‘(3) The rate of interest referred to in subsection (1) and (2) shall come into effect on 1st May, 2001’;
 - (c) by inserting after section 103, the following section:

‘103A(1) Notwithstanding any written law to the contrary, but subject to subsection (2), there shall be a waiver of the following liabilities:

 - (a) interest on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;

- (b) interest charged on the payment, prior to 28th August, 2000, of taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999, where such interest has not been paid;
 - (c) penalties, further tax and additional tax incurred on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (d) penalties, further tax and additional tax in respect of taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 and paid prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties, further tax and additional tax have not been paid;
 - (e) penalties on outstanding returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 where such returns are filed during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (f) penalties with respect to returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 and filed prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties have not been paid.
2. For the avoidance of doubt, the waiver granted in this section shall not apply to the following:
- (a) taxes and business levy;
 - (b) interest, penalties, further tax and additional tax paid prior to 28th August, 2000.

3. Where any returns, taxes and business levy remain outstanding after 30th April, 2001, the penalties, interest, further taxes and additional taxes which would have been payable on such returns, taxes and business levy shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, instead of saying “insert” I might have said “delete.” It was just brought to my attention.

Mr. Speaker: In which one? Is it in (b)?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: No, (a).

Mr. Speaker: It is not “insert”?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: It is “insert” but they are saying that you said, “delete.”

Mr. Speaker: I am very sorry if I did, but I was trying to read what was here. I am very sorry if what I said was “delete”. What is here is “insert.”

(2) For the avoidance of doubt, the waiver granted in subsection (1) does not apply to the following:

- (a) taxes;
- (b) interest, penalties and penal taxes paid prior to 28th August, 2000.

(3) Where any taxes remain outstanding after 30th April, 2001, the interest, penalties and penal taxes which would have been payable on such outstanding taxes shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.”

Whereas as I say it is expedient to confirm the said Order:

Be It Resolved that the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 be confirmed subject to the modifications which were put here on the Order Paper.

Question proposed.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, as a former junior Minister of Finance, I empathize with my colleague on the other side because I am well aware that from time to time Ministers of Finance find it convenient to absent themselves when they have dirty work to do. I would caution my colleague from Tobago East that he should read extremely carefully and consider exactly the intent of anything that is put before him in such circumstances. I can tell him that is what I did. You see, Mr. Speaker, the obvious question is, where is the Minister of Finance this afternoon?

We can see quite clearly that the Member for Tobago East knows nothing of this legislation. He does not even understand the intent of the legislation, which has been a complete embarrassment to this House this afternoon. I would hope that by the time I am finished with my contribution this afternoon, Members on the other side, who are still extremely trustworthy, would have their eyes opened a bit. I am hopeful that, in addition to the Members opposite, the national community would get a better appreciation of what is taking place in our lovely islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, last year you would recall that our budget presentation was entitled “Individual Agendas and Private Interests Parading as Public Policy”. [Interruption] Thanks for the correction. This legislation before the House this afternoon is an example of that. This has nothing to do with public policy. It has to do with providing or attempting to provide a high level of debt forgiveness, interest payments and penalties, to the friends and political investors of that party, [Desk thumping] and I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, perhaps even unknown to most of the Members on the other side. When I look at this I say that the Minister of Finance is obviously a very hard-working Minister for his friends and political investors.

We have read what the law says, the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order. Let us examine it just once more and see what it says and see whether we are making sense here this afternoon. Listen to what it says, Mr. Speaker:

“Whereas it is provided by subsection (1) of section 3 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act, Chap. 74:01...that where proposals for general or supplementary appropriation of public funds are made to the House of Representatives and are embodied in an Appropriation or Supplementary Appropriation Bill, the President may, for the purpose of raising revenue...”

First of all note, “for the purpose of raising revenue”; so it must meet the condition, it must be for raising revenue. It continues to say:

“...to meet the expenditure specified in any such Bill...”

Second condition, “to meet the expenditure specified in any such Bill”. So that we had a budget, certain expenditures, and this is saying that if we impose a tax or we vary a tax, it should be to assist in meeting that expenditure specified in that Bill:

“...by Order, provide for the imposition of a tax or the variation of an existing tax and from the date of the publication of the Order in the Gazette, the tax as imposed or varied shall be payable;”

And Whereas it is provided by subsection (5) of section 3 of the Act that an Order varying an existing tax shall cease to have effect if the Order is not confirmed with or without modifications, by a resolution agreed to by the House within the next twenty-one days after the commencement of the Order;”

So that it is saying that if one imposes a tax and has started collecting that tax and it is not confirmed, then it lapses, if it is not confirmed within 21 days, and one has to give back money to people and so forth.

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It continues, Mr. Speaker, to say:

“*And Whereas* the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 was made under section 3...”

I do not know for what purpose:

“...of the Act, whereby provision was made for the variation of taxes in the written laws mentioned in the said Order, to the extent and in the manner set out therein;”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want somebody to show me where there was a variation of taxes in the written law coming out of the budget. This Motion talks about the forgiveness of penalty and interest outstanding on tax. My first contention, therefore, is that this cannot be done via the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order. It has to be done via a Finance Act. You understand? So the obvious question is, why is it being attempted? Mr. Speaker, it is attempted for a simple reason—for three reasons. One: we have general elections just now. Two: the Government knows it is going to lose. Three: because their friends out there have not paid their taxes for some time, you understand, and have all types of penalties and interest to pay; their friend in Government, the Minister of Finance, is attempting to let them off the hook. [*Desk thumping*] That is what is happening in our country of Trinidad and Tobago. You understand!

We cannot trust these people with the public purse. [*Desk thumping*] Now they come here holier than thou—public purpose—and want to clean up and all sorts of nonsense. All they want to do, Mr. Speaker, is, oh, to provide an avenue to let their friends off the hook. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is, you know.

Mr. Manning: Drink some water.

Mr. K. Valley: I take the counsel. But it is annoying. We sit and we watch the rape of the Treasury, Mr. Speaker, and we ask, “For how much longer?”, and we say, “Of course we just cannot go on this way”. I am sure most of them out there do not know it, you know. They believe the Minister who comes nice and dandy and tells them all types of fancy things, you know, and gives a smile. However, it is rumored to have been said that we would have transparent corruption, and we are seeing it.

You see,. Mr. Speaker, I remember in 1995—let me drink this water first—or thereabouts, the Member for Couva South had a lot to say about debt forgiveness on a particular transaction, all right, where it was a clear commercial arrangement, private transaction, negotiated between the parties. The same Member for Couva

South, who is now Attorney General, is part of a Cabinet that is now talking about debt forgiveness with secrecy because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, one is protected by law under the Income Tax Act, okay, but it is coming out. Thank God this is Trinidad and Tobago. We know who are the large debtors. We know their friends. They have collected some big payments so that they can pay principal and get away from the penalty and interest.

We have to understand, if in fact one owed a debt to the Board of Inland Revenue five, six, 10 or perhaps even 20 years ago, and is now being asked to pay merely principal, and not interest or penalty, then one is paying that debt in deflated dollars. If that person owed \$20 million because he did not send in the workers' tax, and all of these sorts of things, if he owed that in the early 1990s and is now being asked simply to pay the \$20 million without interest in particular, then obviously he is getting a real benefit. Understand that! Understand too that they are rushing it now—as the Minister said, it would have immediate and final impact or effect. That is not so, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I am telling the accounting officers at the Board of Inland Revenue and the Ministry of Finance that they must be bound by the law and they had better get proper legal advice as to whether this can be done via a Provisional Collection of Taxes Order or whether it requires a Finance Act.

You see, Mr. Speaker, in the budget debate which was recently concluded, I made the point in my contribution that while the Minister stated categorically in his contribution that he had met his commitment to set up an Oil Stabilization Fund, in which he put \$415 million, let me open their eyes because I am sure when they sat around the Cabinet table and they saw this matter coming up before the Cabinet, their eyes were opened. Let me read for you, Mr. Speaker, a Cabinet Note of September 12, 2000. Members will remember that the budget was read on August 28 and it was on that day that the Minister stated categorically that he had met his commitment to establish the Oil Stabilization Fund and that he had put \$415 million in that fund investing overseas, Mr. Speaker. Understand that was August 28.

In our contribution we made the point that he did not put any, that he had none to put, because even after taking into consideration all the oil revenues, he had a deficit of some \$280 million. To that effect, Mr. Speaker, you would know because you have given approval for a Motion of censure on the Minister for coming to this House and telling an untruth.

Dr. Rowley: Lie.

Mr. K. Valley: I cannot say “lie” in Parliament. I am not so trained. So that we filed that Motion and it was sent out on Tuesday of this week. So the Cabinet Note is dated September 12. Let me put it into the record for you. September 12 was when, Wednesday here, okay? So I filed the Motion on Monday, it was circulated to Members—I do not have a copy of it. Do you have one? It was circulated on Tuesday, supposed to qualify for the Order Paper sometime September 24, and on September 12, listen to this note, Mr. Speaker:

“The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the need to put in place an interim arrangement to facilitate the establishment of the Revenue Stabilisation Fund.”

[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Read it again.

Mr. K. Valley: It says:

“The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the need to put in place an interim arrangement to facilitate the establishment of the Revenue Stabilisation Fund.”

Is that the same fund that the Minister told us was established on August 28? Paragraph five of this note, Mr. Speaker:

“Cabinet is asked to note that during fiscal year 1999/2000, it is estimated that Government will realize excess oil revenues of \$629 million. This amount has been included in the Revised Estimates of Revenue for fiscal year 1999/2000.”

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Repeat that.

Mr. K. Valley: “This amount has been included in the Revised Estimates of Revenue for fiscal year 1999/2000.”

Dr. Rowley: And the budget deficit is still there.

Mr. K. Valley: I am continuing the quotation:

“...In accordance with the provisions of Cabinet Minute No. 835 dated May 10, 2000, two-thirds of the amount of these funds, approximately \$415,272,000 were earmarked for transfer to the Revenue Stabilization Fund by the close of the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2000.

Pending the enactment of legislation to establish the Revenue Stabilization Fund, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development proposes to put in place an interim arrangement to facilitate the transfer of the amount...”

I do not know where the Minister is getting the money. So he is going to borrow money to put in an oil stabilization fund. It is supposed to be an appropriation from revenues, but the Minister is borrowing money to put in the oil stabilization fund and he calls it savings. Do you understand why the Minister is not here today? He sends the Member for Tobago East—perhaps by twelve o’clock he says he cannot make it; he is tied up somewhere; take it and do it for me. Obviously, you know the Minister loves to do research. If he knew he had to do that last night, he would have been here prepared. But it is the curved ball you are bowled and you fail to see from time to time. I would take a bet that he did not know he had to present this until about midday today—the games played—the transfer of \$415,272,000 from the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, understand that the day after the budget everybody was patting the Minister on his back saying he has done a good thing. He has set aside for a rainy day the sum of \$450 million from oil income, and as I said, friend that umbrella is full of holes, smoke and mirrors; and sleight of hands. I am hoping that by the time I am finished this afternoon Members on the other side—even if it is at this very late hour—would get a better appreciation of what they are dealing with.

Again, in the budget we have made the point that while—thank God for our policies—the economic fundamentals are still strong, fiscal management has been extremely poor and, again, we get old talk from the other side. I want again to put into the record what the Minister told the Cabinet in another Cabinet Note dated September 12, 2000, “Revision of the 1999/2000 Central Government Domestic Borrowing Programme”. Mr. Speaker, listen to this.

Hon. Member: Like you are the Cabinet secretary.

Mr. K. Valley: I get these things in my mailbox. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Imbert: I have one like that.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, listen to what this Government is doing. Let me read paragraph one and it says:

“The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the rescission of its decision to award a mandate to Royal Merchant Bank and Finance Company

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Limited to arrange and fully underwrite a Bond Issue in the amount of TT\$300-Mn. on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Cabinet may recall that by Minute No. 628 dated April 5, 2000 it agreed, *inter alia*, that:

Republic Finance and Merchant Bank Limited (FINCOR) and Royal Merchant Bank and Finance Company Limited be each awarded a mandate to arrange and fully underwrite Bond Issues in the sum of TT\$300-Mn. on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to accelerate the domestic borrowing programme to meet Government's shortfall in its recurrent expenditure."

Do you understand? After all the hullabaloo, smoke and mirrors.

Mr. Manning: How much is it?

Mr. K. Valley: Two \$300 million bond issues to accelerate the domestic borrowing programme to meet Government's shortfall in its recurrent expenditure.

Mr. Manning: Six hundred million dollars?

Mr. K. Valley: I did not write this, I just get it in the mailbox.

Dr. Rowley: Two weeks after he reads the budget he is borrowing \$600 million dollars.

Mr. Manning: And not a word was said about that in the budget.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Dr. Rowley: They should be arrested.

Mr. K. Valley: This note says a few other things and it shows the orientation of the Minister. Let me just give a synopsis of what this note is doing. In addition to taking away the assignment from the Royal Merchant Bank, hear what Cabinet was asked in this note to agree on. You must understand how this Government deals with people where there is a disagreement. I am just reading what the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development recommends and it says:

"In the circumstances, the Minister of Finance recommends and Cabinet is asked to agree that

- (a) its decision of April 5, 2000 to award a mandate to Royal Merchant Bank and Finance Company Limited to arrange and fully underwrite a Bond Issue in the sum of TT\$300-Mn., be rescinded; and

- (b) that Royal Merchant Bank and Finance Company Limited be omitted from future requests for financing proposals pending a satisfactory resolution of this outstanding matter.”

Dr. Rowley: Repeat that. I want to hear that clearly.

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. K. Valley: I will repeat it:

“that Royal Merchant Bank and Finance Company Limited be omitted from future requests for financing proposals pending a satisfactory resolution of this outstanding matter.”

Mr. Speaker, if one reads the note one will see that the issue is, Government received an offer, they were supposed to accept it within a particular time; they failed to accept that offer; they went ahead with the Republic Bank bond issue, and Royal Merchant Bank seems to have been claiming that given that they took \$300 million from the market, “Ah can’t find \$300 million for you again.” Given that disagreement, the Government is now saying that they are not dealing with the Royal Merchant Bank. Mr. Speaker, understand how this Government deals.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying these things because honestly I believe there might be one or two persons on the other side—

Dr. K. Rowley: None! Not one!

Mr. K. Valley: —who are still taken in by the goodly minister. I have counselled them before that whenever the Minister comes with his proposal—because he was in our Cabinet and that is what we had to do—you have to turn it over and look at it sideways and so on because the fellow is just not easy. Understand that! Here we are talking really—amnesty is a nice word—because when you say amnesty you get a feeling that small people and so on are getting help because they have interest, penalty, and so on, but that is not it. Remember that the small man—the public servant—his tax is deducted at source and it is unlikely that he is going to have interest and penalty to pay.

2.45 p.m.

The people who will most likely find themselves in this situation are contractors and others.

Mr. Manning: The big men; the businessmen.

Mr. K. Valley: That is what it is and they want to do it hurriedly. Perhaps, the cheque is already written to pay the principal, because there was something happening in this House.

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Mr. Speaker, you would recall about a month ago, my friend from Couva South came to the House with a Bill to provide for the consolidation of the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking and to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of other crime and the criminalising of money laundering and you would recall that in that legislation, the Second Schedule said, listen, if you are in breach of the Income Tax Act, with the business levy and so forth, they could seize your property.

While the Attorney General is putting things in place to ensure that persons who are in default in certain situations can lose their property, my friend there is making sure there is an escape route for those who want to use it quick, quick now and April 30, they will shut it. So, friend, if you are involved, pay your principal, I will forgive your interest and penalty and go brave. I am saying that this legislation, I am sure, had something to do with that provision also. Because you see the argument. *[Interruption]* You doubt it. You wait. I give you one year and then you will hear about your friends who have been forgiven because Trinidad and Tobago is small and people talk. There is the secrecy of the Income Tax Act, but, thank God this is Trinidad and Tobago and people know what is happening.

Do you feel it is a joke I am making? When I stand here and say these things, I do not say them lightly. I do not believe in rumours and *mauvais langue*. My job here is to try to provide you with some insight as to what is really happening. *[Interruption]* That is right, that you would not get into the Cabinet because he feels all of you know nothing about finance and business. He got the Member for Oropouche sidelined—poor fellow, he almost could not face the polls again. Understand what happened. They tell me that the strong people in the Cabinet, those are the people who came under pressure. Anybody who opened his or her mouth because, somehow they say, “He has the ear of the Prime Minister.” Look at it, St. Joseph who knows something, lick up. Poor Sudama, it is only because he is strong in his constituency that he was able to make it. He knows that.

Take the Member for Couva South, poor fellow.

Mr. Manning: He is the “lick upper”.

Mr. K. Valley: The “lick upper”. I feel sorry for my friend. Sometimes he is very lame.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at this Bill, you see a clear connection between what is attempted and the provisions of this Bill, especially the Second Schedule.

The next issue with which one has to deal is whether on this debt forgiveness, which is still to be quantified, nobody has bothered to tell us what is the extent or how much revenues would be foregone. Nobody is telling us that but we know that the Minister, since he came in, has been having difficulties balancing his budget, although every year he comes talking about budget surpluses and so forth, he ends up with surpluses.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I did not have this document for the budget debate. I think it came a day or two after the budget debate. This is the *Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Economic Bulletin* for May 2000. I will just give an insight into the type of deficit the Minister has been having.

For the year 1999, which ended September of last year, the first quarter of that year, October 1998—December 1998, the deficit was \$425.2 million for the three-month period. For the second quarter, January—March 1999, a deficit of \$142.3 million. For the third quarter, a deficit of \$62.5 million and for the last quarter of last year, July—September, a deficit of \$725.5 million.

Mr. Manning: A deficit!

Dr. Rowley: Oh “goooooood”!

Mr. K. Valley: The deficit for 1999 is \$1,355.5 billion. I am quoting from Table 14 of the Central Bank’s May Bulletin—\$1,355,500,000 deficit.

Mr. Manning: They are borrowing \$600 million to pay foreign debt.

Dr. Rowley: What was the oil price?

Mr. K. Valley: Oil prices started to decline by that time.

That is not all, Mr. Speaker. This report also talks about the first two quarters of the current fiscal year. For the first quarter, October to December of last year, a deficit of \$201 million and for the second quarter, a deficit of \$926.5 million. That is for the first six months of this fiscal year, the Government had a deficit of \$1,127.5 billion.

Mr. Manning: What is the total deficit for the year?

Mr. K. Valley: No. This is for the first six months for this fiscal year and then for the whole of 1999, the year which ended September of last year, the deficit was \$1,355.5 and for the six-month period of this year, the deficit is \$1,127.5 billion. You understand.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister tells us he has a deficit of \$280 million for the whole year. You understand. But, friend, I am sure when it is audited, given the

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direction for the first six months, it is highly unlikely that they would be able to get that deficit to \$280 million. So, you understand why they have to be borrowing from the private sector to finance, not capital expenditure, but recurrent expenditure. Understand that and understand the implications.

When the banks said that you were crowding out the market—because that is the point they were making—that you were appropriating too much resources onto yourself and it did not stop there, they went ahead. It is \$180 million from First Citizens Bank. Giving away money. It is a complete waste of time, simply another mechanism to get funds into the pockets of their friends. That is what it is.

They are not preparing the road works properly. They are simply putting pitch on top of the existing thing knowing very well that within one year, it will be all gone. [*Desk thumping*] It was simply a method. I do not know whom they think they are fooling.

Mr. Manning: That is no joke, you know.

Mr. K. Valley: Simply a method to give money to their friends and so forth. The whole concept, “Oh. Is we time now!” Well, the electorate would have its time whenever you call the election. [*Desk thumping*] Understand. High disorder.

Mr. Speaker, this sleight of hand that is continuing. My colleague from Diego Martin West provided information in the House here with respect to the airport contract, speaking about the particular payment that was made to some Overseas Communications Investment Corporation. The next thing you see, Mr. Speaker, it is like when you draw blood, the response was immediate; the nervousness was there and you saw it. So, Mr. Speaker, you got a letter from whom else but Birk Hillman, that the Minister does not know but whom he knew in 1992. But, perhaps, he is getting old and you know, with old age, you tend to forget. He knew him in 1992; he does not know him now, but he was writing the Prime Minister telling him that he was going to Miami to have preliminary discussions with him.

Listen to what Birk Hillman is saying in this letter. I do not know whether they think before they write. Understand this. Paragraph three says:

“At a time when Mr. Noel Garcia was General Manager of NIPDEC, NIPDEC was afforded full inspection of Birk Hillman Consultants Inc. books relating to the Airport Project and full explanation of everything relating to it.”

That is paragraph three. But, lo and behold, they told us later on:

“Overseas Communications Investment Corp. is an investment holding company fully owned by shareholders of Birk Hillman Consultants Inc...”

A financial transaction between Birk Hillman Consultants Inc. and Overseas Communications Investment Corp. was queried during the inspection, this transaction had no bearing on the contractual relationship between Birk Hillman Consultants Inc. and NIPDEC concerning the Airport project. Accordingly, there was no obligation to give NIPDEC any information about it, as was pointed out at the time.”

But, more importantly, in paragraph three we were told:

“...full explanation...”

—given. That is a blanket statement. But down here, we are being told no, you cannot see that. If you know what is happening there, the whole government falls. That is what I understand by that. This has nothing. They told us to ask any questions we wanted. When I asked a question about that, they say, “Nah! Nah! Nah! You could ask any other question but not about that.”

I want to ask Birk Hillman to put out another paid advertisement or to write the Speaker again because we want to know some other things. We want to know what services were provided for that \$10 million by that company, Birk Hillman? We want to know who are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of that company? We want to know what is the business of that company? We want to know and we want really to thank God that in the United States, the laws of the United States are such that this matter could be investigated further. Understand that.

Mr. Manning: By the Justice Department.

Mr. K. Valley: We want to know also, where are the funds now? We want to know that. You see, this was TT \$10 million. This is dated September 6, 2000.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the saga continued. You could understand when you are on to something, you know it; you see the nervousness coming out. Then, we have a statement from Nipdec, a full page telling us things that we did not even know or ask. The *Newsday* of Thursday, September 14, 2000 at page 49, says:

“We note from the daily newspapers that allegations have been made in Parliament that the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) either directly or through Birk Hillman Consultants Incorporated (BHC) made a payment of \$10.0 million to a ‘ghost’ company—”

I do not know if anybody knew that.

“...‘Overseas Communication Investment’.”

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I understand that the people said the company exists. I do not know anybody. They know it is a ghost company. They gave us information that we did not even have.

3.00 p.m.

The second paragraph tells us:

“We have examined our files...”

Examine the files that they start destroying?

“...and at no time has any document been presented to NIPDEC to substantiate billings...”

But of course. None came, that is what they were trying to find out. But the people told them “doh” ask that. They have no information to substantiate billings, we know that.

“...and/or requests from BHC in respect of Overseas Communication Investment.”

Birk Hillman is telling us that, in fact, it was there and it was queried by Nipdec. Nipdec is telling us—

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. K. Valley: Where are we going? Tell us. Where are we going in this town? If one reads this thing, one would say this is madness. What is really happening in our town? Birk Hillman is telling us one thing. But did Nipdec not read this? Or were they just instructed—answer that, let me stay from it, you have to protect me, so put out something. And they put out something. Do you understand? More hot waters. Understand that!

Mr. Manning: They are trying to involve the Speaker in that.

Mr. K. Valley: Poor Mr. Speaker, oh gosh, Mr. Speaker. I do not know what they want to get you into. I do not know.

Mr. Speaker: Please, I would not like to be in this one, please.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the joke continues. My colleague spoke about a bifold door. How much should that door cost? The door should have costed \$472.50, it cost \$98,000. I read the newspapers, and I understand the Minister of Works and Transport said that there is no bifold door in the airport. It is worse than we thought. They “tief de” thing now. *[Laughter]* After escalating the price to \$98,000, they thief the thing.

We have one person in the *TnT Mirror* saying that it was a mistake. The Minister said that it is not there. One is saying that it is definitely in, but we put it as a mistake at that price. The next one says it was never there, it did not reach the airport. “Dey tief de” door, Mr. Speaker. This is the town in which we live.

Mr. Speaker, simply, I hope that Members opposite would have a better appreciation. But, those who are concerned—the few who might be—I know they tried to shut up the few—if you believe in Trinidad and Tobago, if you believe in morality, then you owe a vested interest in continuing the fight within the Cabinet. Even at this late stage, I counsel those Members opposite.

I contend that this matter does not fall properly on the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order. This is known. I am sure it is known. The attempt to provide debt forgiveness to certain persons, surreptitiously, will not work. It is hurriedly brought here, rather than waiting on the Finance Bill, simply because their friends are saying: “Do not take any chances. What will happen if you lose the elections? I want this thing.” They were hurrying him to do it quickly before the election. They are not taking chances, because friends, let me tell you something, is gone he gone. Do you understand? Him and his friends.

I think it was Power who had a calypso some time ago: “Whe Chin? Chin gone.” If you want to know what is happening in a country or a government, just check what Chin is doing. “Is gone he gone.”

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the Member for Diego Martin Central on an excellent contribution. He has hit on the core of the issue. We on this side are asked to agree to a form of debt forgiveness, some strange debt forgiveness, which this Government has come up with. As my colleague has indicated; you cannot help the inescapable conclusion that one comes to, that this is intended to assist certain close associates of the ruling party.

Mr. Speaker, when this matter was first raised in the budget debate, it had a different form, a very different form. At that time, the waiver only applied to those persons or companies who paid their taxes and filed their returns between August 28, 2000 and May of next year. It was intended, at that time, to facilitate persons who had not yet filed their returns, and who had not yet paid their taxes. Clearly, it was intended to facilitate a particular group of individuals who had been remiss in submitting returns and paying taxes and so on. It was obviously inequitable, Mr. Speaker. If there are persons who had already filed their returns

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and paid their taxes but, for one reason or another, had not yet paid the penalty or the interest, they were excluded from this amnesty.

At the time of the budget, this measure was not intended to help persons who had already paid taxes and had already filed returns, but had not yet paid penalty and interest, which is quite a considerable number of persons. It was intended to help persons who were coming in the future. I notice now it has changed. Because that would have been punitive: to penalize persons who had already paid taxes and filed returns, and to favour persons who had not yet paid taxes or filed returns. They have changed it now, so that the persons who have already filed returns and paid taxes are now included in this umbrella. Do you think it is easy with these people, Mr. Speaker? That is why that is sufficient evidence that it was definitely intended to help certain persons who, I am certain, would have been privy to this matter and, therefore, would not have filed their returns or paid taxes.

We have to ask the question—as was asked by my colleague—why is the Government engaging in debt forgiveness when it continues to increase the national debt? Why? They are borrowing here and there for recurrent expenditure. I am now hearing it is probably the first time that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, any government of Trinidad and Tobago, has borrowed that kind of money for recurrent expenditure. It is simply not done. The Member for Tobago East knows it. You do not dig a hole here to fill a hole over there. That is not good business.

3.10 p.m.

It is obvious in this election year that this is what it is all about; the \$600 million that is going to be borrowed, or has been borrowed recently, is to buy time for the present administration, having already mislead us and told so many untruths about our debt situation. Really, Mr. Speaker, we have a difficulty: why should we agree to debt forgiveness when they are being so irresponsible and cavalier with the public debt? We need to correct the record, because the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and the UNC Government are strangers to the truth. I need to reinforce that fact and correct the record.

During the budget debate the Minister stated on several occasions in several places in his budget speech that one of his proudest achievement was reduction of the public debt; it appear in several places in his budget statement. I wish to put back into the record that in 1995 the public debt was \$18.8 billion and in September 2000 the public debt is \$30 billion. No amount of fancy Arithmetic could equate an increase from \$18.8 billion to \$30 billion to be a reduction. No

amount of foreign language translation could create a reduction where an \$11 billion increase exists.

When the Minister was caught—because we referred to his own document, Appendix 16 of the *Review of the Economy*, which demonstrates \$18.8 billion in 1995; \$29.97 billion, round it off to \$30 billion, September 2000—he said, “Ah didn’t mean de whole debt, ah meant de foreign debt.” Well, that is another untruth, because in 1995, according to the Minister’s own document, the external debt was \$9.7 billion. Let me read that again: in 1995 the external debt of Trinidad and Tobago was \$9.7 billion, that is in Appendix 16 of the *Review of the Economy*, yet in September 2000 the external debt is \$10.7 billion. Once again, no amount of foreign language translation—I do not know if the Minister is travelling to Venezuela or something—could take a \$9.7 billion in 1995 and \$10.7 billion in 2000 and say that that is a reduction; so neither the total public debt nor the foreign debt decreased in the period under review; and this is the Minister’s own document.

He was caught scrambling again, and I understand that he came up with some other ridiculous stories in the Senate to deal with this debt situation. He said \$4.5 billion of the debt was the People’s National Movement’s debt, and he gave examples. He said \$1.2 billion debt to public servants. Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall that the debt to public servants, which was created by the 10 per cent salary cut and the suspension of COLA was created some time in 1987 and 1988; that is my memory, I hope it is correct.

Dr. Rowley: By the Member for Couva North!

Mr. C. Imbert: By the Member for Couva North. I seem to remember that the Member for Couva North was in a Cabinet that created the debt to public servants in 1987; that is my memory. [*Desk thumping*] So how is this Minister in 2000 saying that the debt to public servants was created by the People’s National Movement? What kind of mathematics is that? Naked untruths!

Next one; he says that the Maximum Security Prison and the police headquarters’ debt of \$800 million was created by the PNM. Now, Mr. Speaker, the police headquarters building was completed before the 1991 general election by a previous administration. It was finished before the December 1991 general election. They had an opening ceremony, but that is a PNM debt? The Maximum Security Prison contract was signed in November 1991 before the election was called. That is a PNM debt? You see how these “fellas does” twist the truth, Mr. Speaker? “Yuh see how dey does” twist the truth!

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When we left government in November 1995, I seem to recall that the cost of the Maximum Security Prison was \$220 million; that is what my memory tells me. So how come the \$800 million? Yes, that is what the Minister said in the Senate. [*Crosstalk*] He said that we, the People's National Movement, are responsible for the \$800 million Maximum Security Prison debt, but the contract was \$220 million in November 1995. So how did it go from \$220 million in November 1995 to \$800 million in September 2000? How?

The other question I have to ask about that debt, because we are talking about debt forgiveness. We are forgiving debt when we deep in the hole, “yuh know”. We giving up tax and all kind “ah thing” when we are down in the precipice. The contractors said—I remember because I was Minister—that the prison was virtually complete in 1995, all they had to do was to complete the installation of the sliding doors on the cells; that is it, the locks.

If what the contractors said was correct—and the contractors are very good friends of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, and a financier of the UNC [*Interruption*—is a fact, nobody denied that; they went public and said so—and the contractors are to be believed, that the prison was virtually complete in November 1995, then how come they take five years to commission that prison? Could it be that something went on and interest kept accumulating from November 1995, to November 1996, to November 1997, to November 1998, 1999 and so forth, compounding all the time? Maybe that is why it went from \$220 million in 1995 to \$800 million in 2000, and now it has been put on the books. Why is it coming on the books? If it was over 90 per cent complete in 1995, why is that project coming on the books in the year 2000? So that deals with that.

So the public servant debt was created by another administration and the Maximum Security Prison was created by another administration. I want to make the point that there is a particular individual who was very instrumental in putting together the design/finance/construct arrangement for the National Alliance for Reconstruction administration in the period 1986—1991. A particular individual was very instrumental, and the Member for St. Augustine will know who I am talking about. A particular person put that whole thing together; thought it up, created the framework, made the arrangements, or was heavily involved in the whole system.

You know who it was, Mr. Speaker? The present Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. Think it easy with those “fellas”. When he was in the private sector “he come up with dat”. “Yuh” hear this thing about he did not know Birk Hillman, he never knew them, he never met them, “doh” know anything

about them—[*Steups*]—but going to Miami to see them; hmm, hmm, Mr. Speaker. There was a particular contract that was nearly awarded in 1991 for the airport, and guess who the consultants were? Birk Hillman; and as I have said, I have already told you the person who was very involved in this design/finance/construct arrangement, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. I would not say any more now, Mr. Speaker, but I can say without fear of contradiction that the Minister was familiar with the firm Birk Hillman as far back as January 1992.

The next debt of the PNM is Taurus. Now, all Taurus is, Mr. Speaker, is a collection of debts of the Agricultural Development Bank and other state loans and so forth, and I fail to see how the \$700 million Taurus debt came on the books in 1996, as the Minister claims, because the People's National Movement left it there. I mean, what utter nonsense! The ADB already had these liabilities, and it is a wholly-owned state organization, so it would have already been counted within the public debt.

Notwithstanding that, if what the Minister said is correct, that the PNM left him with all this debt, this \$4.5 billion of debt, then I would like you to look at these figures: total public debt 1995, \$18.8 billion; total public debt 1996, \$18.6 billion, it went down. So what happened to the \$4.5 billion in PNM debt, it went to limbo or something and parked up to wait until the year 2000? Mr. Speaker, this whole thing is a tissue of untruths and lies.

That is why I have a difficulty dealing with this issue here today; a big difficulty, because there are many, many liabilities and debts which are not on the books right now, and in that \$30 billion public debt that the Minister had admitted to in his document, there is no account of the \$1.3 billion airport debt, the \$700 million guarantee for the desalination plant; the \$900 million guarantee for InnCogen; the stadiums, the schools, the \$200 million that they just got the Tourism Industrial Development Corporation to borrow for roads; none of that inside of there. Billions and billions of dollars in current liabilities that the Minister is hiding. The public debt is probably closer to \$35 billion.

Hon. Member: Why not \$350 million?

Mr. C. Imbert: We will find out the correct number in due course. He has admitted to \$30 billion, but we know there are many projects that are not on the books at this point in time; many, many projects. So, Mr. Speaker, I echo the sentiments of my colleague from Diego Martin Central: this has to be looked at very carefully. We have to see whether in fact section 3 of the Provisional

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Collection of Taxes Act allows for waiver of penalties and interest, because those are not taxes *per se*. If the lawyers believe that you can interpret the words "variation of a tax" to mean penalties on interest, fine. I am not going to argue with the Chief State Solicitor or the Treasury Solicitor or whoever; I am not going to argue.

I am simply asking the Attorney General to consult with his legal experts and determine whether waiver of a penalty and waiver of interest are equivalent to variation of a tax. To me, variation of a tax is removal of a tax, reduction of a tax or increase of a tax; that is how you vary a tax.

Mr. Valley: That is ordinarily.

Mr. C. Imbert: You take it away, you send it up, or send it down, that is variation of a tax. I do not see how waiver of a penalty, which in itself is not a tax, and waiver of interest, which is not a tax, becomes variation of a tax, but as I said once the legal advisors indicate that there is nothing wrong with this, I would be prepared to accept it. My colleague has said it is wrong, and has called for a legal opinion on this matter, but there is another point.

3.25 p.m.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the projected revenue loss and revenue gain with this measure? What is it all about? What is the plan? What is going on? How much revenue does the Minister expect the country to lose with this measure? Can he tell us that? Has any calculation been done on the amount of money involved? Has there been any examination, projection or estimate done of how much money will be forgone? How much money certain category of businesses stand to gain from this measure?

Let the Minister tell us, because as my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central said, he has been put here without preparation to deal with a very touchy subject. They are sticking this through, it appears, to help their partners who owe large amounts of VAT because when you have a \$200 million contract, the VAT on that is \$30 million, and if you have not remitted the VAT for a year or two, then the interest that you might owe on that VAT could be as much as \$1 million. If you have a contract for \$200 million, the VAT on it is \$30 million, the interest on that is \$400 or \$500 per year, and if it is two years in abeyance, you are talking about \$1 million in interest that is going to be waived.

With the propensity of this administration, it has awarded some hefty contracts in the last two, three years or so running into hundreds of millions and billions, and I think there is a lot of VAT involved. I think some well-placed people are going to benefit to the tune of millions of dollars from this amnesty. I wonder if the acting Minister is aware of the shenanigans of exactly what is taking place in this House.

Coming back to the question of debts and this road paving programme where we are borrowing \$180 million from the local market through the banks to lend to TIDCO of all people, the tourism company. They do not have a clue about paving roads and the Minister has even less of a clue. You know, I have never heard of such a hay brained scheme. There is the new Minister coming into the Senate and saying—The Ministry of Works and Transport which has at any given time when you count the monthly and daily-paid workers, there are about 10,000 employees. It has one of the largest equipment fleets in the country, has quarries, 40 years of experience in road construction and paving. The ministry which has been set up to deal with roads, it has the responsibility for roads and you have a new Minister coming into this Parliament in the other place—and they think we are all a pack of fools, they think we are stupid—making a statement that the Ministry of Works and Transport is not equipped to pave roads.

It is only under the UNC that a Government Minister could say that the ministry of public works is not equipped to deal with public works. That is what he said. He said the Ministry of Works and Transport is not equipped to pave roads and invite tenders. The Ministry of Works and Transport has over 50 professionals, working for it: architects; engineers; quantity surveyors; planners; economists; accountants; it has over 40 years experience, thousands of staff, district officers all over the country, but the new Minister, “Mr. Big stuff” I think he is called, decides this ministry does not have the skill and he is giving it to TIDCO.

TIDCO runs carnival shows, you know, and Miss Universe; that is what they do. That is their expertise, to run Miss Universe contest and waste \$80 million of the people’s money. That is the expertise that resides at TIDCO, \$80 million wastage, that is what they could do, but all of sudden, TIDCO inviting tender for asphalt, evaluating tender for asphalt and monitoring contract for asphalt. You ever hear more foolishness? And increasing the public debt by \$200 million and, as my colleague for Diego Martin Central says, they are paving on top of mud. They are paving on top of leaking water mains, they are paving the shoulder. If there is a grasshopper in the road they paving that, too. They paving rain, Mr. Deputy

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Speaker. It would last for no more than six months. As a matter of fact, I have seen work that has been done by this administration within the last month and the asphalt is coming up already, 30 days and it coming up already. But it is all an obscene desire to engage in squandermania and increase the public debt before election.

In my constituency if you see what they are doing. They have some mad idea to create some roundabout where they will send people from the savannah, through Federation Park, down Long Circular Road, around Camp Ogden, down by Assumption Church and back. That is how you have to get into Maraval now. I am living in Maraval 20 years and I am accustomed to driving on Maraval Road, now I have to drive down Rapsey Street, Barbados Road, Long Circular Road, all around the American Ambassador's residence, up the hill, down the hill, pass the church by the country club.

That is the kind of craziness that is taking place with this road enhancement programme, that is the kind of craziness that is taking place with this \$200 million programme that TIDCO is doing. Spending millions of dollars to inconvenience the 15,000 residents of Maraval, millions of dollars to cause chaos in Maraval, to have people with children waiting for hours in traffic jam. That is what they want to do. Spending millions of dollars, all for one person, a UNC financier. It has nothing to do with me, it is to help a UNC financier. They want to inconvenience 15,000 persons to help one man just because he contributed, I think it is \$1 million, to the UNC campaign in the last election. Political investors. *[Interruption]* They have plenty of them, you know. Not only the "big three", there are more. Just because a certain individual is rumoured to have contributed \$1 million to the UNC campaign, they want to send 15,000 people from my constituency on some walkabout like in the Australian bush. Instead of travelling 100 yards, you have to travel two miles to get into Maraval. All to help one man, one friend of the Prime Minister. That is what is going on in this country today, borrowing millions of dollars to inconvenience 15,000 Maraval residents to help the Prime Minister's friend.

I want to tell the Prime Minister today, "We are waiting for you—I and the other 15,000 residents of Maraval—we are waiting for you. Just don't try it."

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin as a Tobagonian by birth, with an apology for my fellow countryman, the Member for Tobago East, as a man who has demonstrated the extent of his learning in this House, this afternoon must have been his nadir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have stood in this place for almost five years and said over and over that the people on the other side who are responsible for the public affairs are doing a disservice to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] This afternoon my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, has demonstrated in the most succinct manner how the Government can be correctly accused of mismanaging public affairs. It is one thing to be mismanaging the public affairs and another thing to be coming to the House time and time again, and even going into the public domain and not speaking the truth about the state of affairs. It is now the habit of virtually every Minister to not speak the truth, so we are at the point now where anything a Minister says is open to challenge and is more than likely to be shown not to be the truth.

When we debated the budget two weeks ago, something stood out very obviously and it was the decline in VAT revenues. Two years ago, the economy of Trinidad and Tobago which was smaller than it is now, because it was supposed to have grown by 7 per cent last year and by 5 per cent the year before, that smaller economy generated VAT revenues of \$2,141 million so it was very surprising to all of us when the larger economy that is supposed to be humming along, was shown to be generating VAT revenues of only \$1,835 million on this occasion. We said one or two things could be happening, either there is tremendous leakage with respect to the collection of VAT revenues, or there was something inherently wrong with the reporting.

My friend from St. Joseph gave some big “hoo ha” about the World Trade Organization (WTO) opening up the economy, but as a result of opening up the economy we were losing revenues. Totally erroneous! The economy was opened when we collected the \$2.1 billion, and there was no further significant reduction in the CET or any similar tariff. So this nonsense he was trying to tell us was just another example of the Government having to explain something and either not knowing what to say, or deliberately resorting to untruths.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here we have a situation that we see for a fact that the VAT revenues are substantially lower than they ought to be because it follows logically that if the economy is growing and it has grown to a larger size, Government should be collecting more money because VAT is a revenue collected from business transactions in the growing economy. We have good reason to believe that there are many people out there who, for one reason or the other, might not have paid their VAT.

Without giving us a proper explanation other than the nonsense spoken by the ex-Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, in the same budget where we saw the

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loss of VAT revenue demonstrated in a worrying way, in the same budget where the Minister of Finance hid the true facts of our financial situation where we were running on overdraft deficit. The last 18 months, there was a deficit of \$2,483 million. In that same budget, the Minister of Finance comes up with this gift, this goody, for some people and says to them they have until May to file their tax and if in so doing they are owing moneys, “I, the great Santa Claus, by this single action, will contribute millions to you.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will give you an example and I am not casting aspersions on any contractor, I am simply giving an example of how much VAT could be involved in some contracts. There are three contractors in this country who in the last three years got among themselves—and the fact that they got the contracts under questionable circumstances is not what I am on here now. I am just stating a fact that three contractors were able to land \$974 million worth of contracts in the last three years. That is 15 per cent.

3.40 p.m.

If we look at the construction of the physical structure of the terminal building—and I would come back to that—the total cost of that, including VAT, is \$885 million. The Vat on that is \$115 million. Let us for argument sake say, that 10 per cent of that Vat is still outstanding, how much is owing? Eleven and a half million dollars. If 50 per cent of that is outstanding over \$50 million is still outstanding. That is the kind of thing we are talking about. I must make it quite clear, I do not know what is outstanding. I am simply saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if, for any reason, that kind of situation exists, that is the kind of revenue that the Government is prepared to forego.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total consulting fees, to date, including the \$48 million to Nipdec on the airport terminal building is \$214 million. The characters, Birk Hillman who wrote the Speaker—I do not know for what purpose. Because if the Attorney General could not discipline me and the Prime Minister could not get the Speaker to discipline the Attorney General for not disciplining me, I do not know what Birk Hillman could do to the Speaker. But he writes the Speaker. I do not know what they are hoping to get from that, but I am telling you that Birk Hillman has earned \$166 million. Fifteen per cent of that is vatable. Has it been paid? I do not want anybody on the Government side to try to answer me because I will not believe them, they do not speak the truth. [*Desk thumping*]

With respect to construction support services, utilities and so on to the airport contract, another \$77 million on which 15 per cent VAT is due. And the famous

claim of \$29 million which Northern Construction got for the delay in the contract when the Prime Minister caused it to be stopped, VAT is due on that, too, at 15 per cent. Four and a half million dollars thereabouts. In that one construction of that building alone there are liabilities of somewhere between \$165 million and \$170 million in VAT. Has that been paid? Is there anybody on the other side who would get up this evening and tell us for a fact that that VAT has been paid? Because the airport should have been opened on August 30 and, therefore, all moneys or most of those moneys should have been paid according to the VAT regulations. Is there anybody, including the Member for Tobago East, who is prepared to hazard a guess here this evening, who could get up and say that the state has received all that VAT revenue? Because if you do not know and you cannot do that then you are very irresponsible and facilitatory to come with a measure like this to forego VAT of this possible magnitude.

The Government is irresponsible and the Cabinet that approved this is a facilitator of a rape of the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We asked them in the budget debate: how much is going to be foregone in this matter? I have been listening to budget debates since I was 15 years old, and one of the things that usually happens when a Minister of Finance talks about a measure—whether it is something giving or something taking—he gives an idea of how much money is involved. That is why it is called a budget. So you are going to do certain things, you examine it to see what is the potential cost of this. Nobody on the Government side is prepared to get up and tell us how much revenue the Government would forego in this matter. That alone should tell us that they either do not know or they do not care. My Friend from Tobago East probably cares but, obviously, from his performance here this evening he obviously does not know. This is governance of the worst kind. It is mismanagement, it is facilitatory and it lacks everything, which could remotely be applied in a situation of good governance. And, of course, they do not care because it does not bother them.

I heard on the news today, as I was preparing to come to Parliament that there was a spokesman for the Aranguez Junior Secondary School. It was in Aranguez that they voted solidly for this Government, causing my colleague from St. Joseph to lose his seat and put them in Government. Today I shuddered when I heard this man from Aranguez speaking on the national news item today, saying that for the last year there was no teacher for English or Mathematics in Aranguez Junior Secondary School. This Government does not care.

At the very moment, they have been making a big song and dance about every child—whether you score zero or 30—must be in a high school. This is in

Aranguéz Junior Secondary School where children have got places. I am not just saying so, I am saying what I heard on the news today and I have good reason to believe it, because the gentleman was not a Member of the Cabinet so he could have been speaking the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what level of irresponsibility that the Government could have found itself? Let me not say, “the Government” because half of them probably do not read the Cabinet notes; some of them do not understand it; because when you come here talking about “paradigm”, you are not going to understand anything about finance. So let us assume that there are some people in the Cabinet, who, for one reason or the other, are not interested in the Cabinet notes, I must hold the Prime Minister and those persons with some level of competence, responsible. If you are in a Cabinet and you are seeing the finances of the country going in the direction where in 18 months, the Government, in a period of high oil prices—because do not forget we were in a period of plenty. The last 18 months we had some of the best oil prices we could have conceived. We were budgeting at \$14 and \$16 a barrel, and we were getting \$20-odd a barrel, and during that period you are in the Cabinet and you see the Government running a deficit of \$2,483 million!

Let me explain that to my Friend from Nariva who does not understand anything but jumping up and down. That means the Government has spent \$2,483 million more than it had in revenues. Mr. Valley: That they did not plan to spend too.

Mr. Valley: That they did not plan to spend too.

Dr. K. Rowley: And it did not budget to spend that. It was “ad hoc”. And while that is happening he is still approving Cabinet notes for the Government to raise revenues willy-nilly.

Last week I had to talk to my colleague from Caroni East, responsible for the water supply to my constituency, and my Friend from Diego Martin East. We asked to meet with him here in the Committee Room of this Parliament building, and he brought the WASA technicians here. This is because the people of the western peninsula were not getting water. All this ‘ole’ talk about water for all by the year 2000. Mr. Speaker, where I live in upper Glencoe we have not had water in our pipes for almost four months. The people of the higher area in Carenage, they, too, have not had water for over 12 weeks. The people of West Vale and Rich Plain have gone from a regular three-day supply to one day a week. In that situation, I asked to meet with my colleague from Caroni East and he met with us, and they told us then, that, maybe, in a week’s time it can be ameliorated. What

we were being told is that they repaired a pump and they repaired wells. So while people are going through these kinds of hardships, the Government is prepared to borrow money to literally throw down the drain. 3.50 p.m.

3.50 p.m.

One of the reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not have a perfect water supply in the Glenco valley is because the line that runs up the main road for distribution into the valley is an old line and breaks very frequently, so as MP I was making no demand on the Government to pave the road. We in Glenco were prepared to live with the road. What we were asking for is the road to be dug up and a new line laid, and I was given the impression that this bit of common sense had soaked into the Government. There were potholes in the road. The corporation from time to time would patch the potholes because we knew it made more sense to use Government money—public moneys—to patch the road while we waited for WASA to dig up the road and put in a pipeline.

Lo and behold, on the eve of an election, I was in my home. I looked outside and I could not believe what I was seeing—a whole line of trucks and equipment, and they paved the road like the Piarco highway, over the leaks; leaks gone notwithstanding. They just put some more into the holes and they paved the road. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you go to Glenco now, one of the many leaks that was paved over has already erupted through the new pavement. My concern is this. While it is okay to drive on smooth roads, good for the cars, good for one's pocket and so forth, I ask the Minister this. I have to ask. Now that we have paved the road without putting the pipes in, does that mean we are not going to get the pipes?

If we do not get the new pipe we are not going to get any water. If he had asked us anything we would have said to him, "We prefer to get the water and keep the old road than to get a new road for six months and no water." I am sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not a singular situation. I only gave you that as an example. So as the Member of Parliament for the area, I say, we want the water and we want the new road dug up so the pipes can be laid and the road repaired after. One only has to see. Did this Government really have to pave that road, knowing full well that it had to be dug up so that a waterline could be laid there in the very near future? That is how this Government is spending public money.

The Government, by its own Cabinet Note of May 1999, decided to put all these children in schools by September 2001. In case they do not know, I could lend them a copy of the Cabinet Note. The target date was September 2001. Lo and behold, in the year 2000 when the elections are due, they suddenly "get ah

vaps” and decide that it is good for election purposes to put them in the school before the election. They do not have the schools; they do not have the places.

So in Tobago—apparently Tobago is not part of this country, so they can treat Tobagonians anyhow they want. So they have a Cabinet Note to give a fool to bring to the Parliament. They gave it to my friend from Tobago East to come to Parliament and make a fool of himself. All children in the country can go to school. They all have places in school, but in Tobago, 628 students have no places because the places were never there. The Prime Minister and his Tonto went to Tobago, looked around the island and could not even find a building to put students in. When he is confronted now by the fact that there are children in Tobago, some sent to the wrong school—in Roxborough they were sent with book list, uniform and book bag to Roxborough Secondary. Hundreds of children turned up at Roxborough Secondary only to be asked, “Who are you? What you come here for?” You understand! Yet the Prime Minister is telling the press, “I am distressed to discover that children in Tobago are not in school”, and he is traumatized that these poor children—as a result of his election decision they have ended up in that position, but now he is the most surprised person. There was never any space to put them in.

In Trinidad where they attempted to accelerate the construction to meet the target date, they assigned children to construction sites. [*Interruption*]

Miss Nicholson: That is not true. Truth?

Dr. K. Rowley: So what does the Member think the 10 schools under construction are? They are construction sites. Until such time as they are completed and handed over to the Government—there is a formal procedure of handing over by a contractor to a client, and until that is done it is a construction site. So they have assigned children to construction sites and, like the airport, they are prepared to pay additional moneys, to take night to make day, to create the space to put the children in time for elections, and one has to ask if that was necessary.

The objective of putting children into school is a laudable one—nobody can argue with that—but they were in school before. One has to ask, those moneys they are paying the contractor, two, three and four times the going rate, to meet this artificial election deadline, what if those moneys were paid specifically to address the problems of the particular students? Suppose they had used that money in the primary schools on those same children? Is that money better off in the pocket of a contractor who is charging four times the rate because they want it

like yesterday? [*Desk thumping*] That is what they are doing. They could put sugar-coating on it, they could put honey, they could put molasses, that is what they are doing, electioneering with the children, and at the end of the day one thing runs through—they do not care what they pay. They do not care how they use the nation's money. [*Desk thumping*] It is as simple as that.

They are going down the road to pay \$120,000 a month for a B.H. Rose warehouse. When I heard the Member for Siparia talk about a model school, I asked, "Where?" One of my constituents has a child who was appointed to a school, "Place of school—Port of Spain". She came to me in distress. "My child pass for Port of Spain." I said, "Well, somebody pass for de Croisee." The next thing I know I heard the "Port of Spain" is in fact the B.H. Rose warehouse. I passed by the B.H. Rose warehouse and I looked at the place—low building, huge, open warehouse with huge glass panes. I said, "For this building to become a school, one, it has to be air-conditioned—somebody has to pay for air-conditioning to operate that school—two, it has to be partitioned; and three, when B.H. Rose built that building they might have had 20 or 40 staff members in there. They would have two toilets, one for males and one for females. When they put 200 or 300 students inside that building they have to build toilets.

To convert the B.H. Rose warehouse to a school is going to cost millions of dollars. I still want to ask my colleague from Siparia, if she really cared about those children, instead of spending money to buy wood and nails to improve the B.H. Rose property—we will find out who owns it—if that money was actually spent on the children's problem, does she not think we could have had a better result? [*Desk thumping*] Suppose they had said to TTUTA and the university and the retired teachers, "Come up with a programme and we will give you \$10 million to address that problem where it lies". There are autistic children in this country. How is throwing them into that situation going to help? After they spend all the money on the construction, if they are going to get any success they will still have to spend money on the child's problem. Research has shown that in any population of people there are a number of children who will have learning difficulties and learning disabilities. They will have to address that. [*Dr. Job rose*]

Has the Member found out how to present the Bill yet? [*Laughter*] If not, he should keep his seat. [*Interruption*] Does the Member want to be the Speaker now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Tobago East, what is it? What is the interruption about?

Dr. Job: I am trying to find out what the B.H. Rose building has to do with the Order.

Dr. K. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you make the point. The point I make is the Government's cavalier handling of the public moneys. [*Desk thumping*] If he is too [*Words expunged*] to understand that, then he should not be where he is. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have been here long enough to know that is offensive language to a Member of the House.

Dr. K. Rowley: Which language?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The ones you just used. Please expunge those words from the records.

Dr. K. Rowley: Which ones?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The last four words you just used.

Dr. K. Rowley: [*Words expunged*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is offensive language to a Member.

Dr. K. Rowley: I will withdraw it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have withdrawn it for you.

Dr. K. Rowley: I tell you I am withdrawing, you know. But Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your intervention and I must—I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because if I do sound provoked it is because I am provoked. [*Desk thumping*] This Government has been consistently, systematically and deliberately mispending the public moneys [*Desk thumping*] and when they are called to account, they resort to naked untruths and that provokes me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] So when he gets up to intervene in my presentation, you understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologize, but I mean, it is something that they must understand; they have been hired to do a job and as they are doing the job their motive is being examined and every time one has to ask, “Does this make sense?” and “Why is it being done?” He must have missed the point I was making.

While they would not account for the loss in VAT, they are bringing a Bill to give away VAT revenues and I ask, why is that being done? They are foregoing revenues at a time when their deficit is reaching record levels. I warn you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if the oil price falls as it could, we are going to be in serious

difficulty in this country as a result of the nonsense done by this Government. [Desk thumping] We are only lucky that so far we have had a good run of oil prices. The projection for oil prices in the spring—I do not know if you follow it, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[Interruption] Did the Member say something? The projection for oil prices beyond spring—between now and springtime, the experts who forecast oil prices indicate that oil prices would be in the order of \$25 and probably a bit higher. Beyond spring the projections are that oil prices could retreat to the order of \$25 and lower. In fact, the finance houses in New York are making their projections based on an oil price of \$20.

I want you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to recompute the 1999/2000 Budget on a \$20 oil price and you will see very clearly what we have escaped. While we have escaped that, when we look at how the Government has been spending money—[Interruption]

Mr. Ramsaran: Is the Member—[Inaudible]

Dr. K. Rowley: My friend is in no danger.

Hon. Member: Am I?

Dr. K. Rowley: Very much so.

Mr. Sudama: What about San Fernando East, is he in danger?

Dr. K. Rowley: No, he is all right. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing about this Government is that it has deliberately refused to learn. I was right here in this place when I objected to the Prime Minister allocating funds for flood relief to the Ministry of Public Utilities. All the points made by my colleague from Diego Martin East applied then. We asked the question then, “What then is the purpose of the multimillion dollar Ministry of Works and Transport with all its human resources and equipment resource and a Minister of Works who is forever claiming that he is the best in terms of performance, yet when there is a little flooding in Chaguanas the moneys for the flood relief are put in the Ministry of Public Utilities and the Minister in charge is the Minister of Housing and Settlements?”

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we made the point that we have had no satisfactory accounting for how that flood relief money was spent, because I can tell you, it was spent in a very *vaille-que-vaille* manner and some persons got very rich and that is what we are objecting to. Do you think the Government has learnt? Or, do you think they deferred to reason? No, no. The Government went and borrowed

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money and gave it to Tidco to pave roads and the Minister who is defending Tidco—my friend, the current minister of paving—says Tidco has the track record of Miss Universe. The Minister should not have said that because I was worried before, but now I am scared to death. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what you read, but I try to read everything that comes my way. There is a magazine called *Contact* published by the Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago. In that magazine, there is an article which refers to a report which I have had access to. The report is an evaluation of Tidco that was commissioned by Tidco to see how Tidco has been spending the public money! Do you know what the report shows? It shows that under this Government Tidco has spent \$200 million on travel and promotion, mainly travel.

Mr. Imbert: Travel?

Dr. K. Rowley: But as if that is not bad enough, the report concludes that the money was largely wasted because none of the objectives were achieved. That is Tidco. The Prime Minister bypasses the Ministry of Works and Transport with its engineers; its cost accountants; its quantity surveyors; its clerk of the works; and all its staff, equipment and experience. This Prime Minister bypasses the Ministry of Works and Transport and puts his riding partner in charge of Tidco and borrows money and gives it to Tidco to pave roads, when Tidco on being assessed for its own core purpose was deemed to have wasted \$200 million under this Government's stewardship. So do you understand when we say that the Government and the Cabinet is facilitating the rape of the Treasury, we do not say so lightly. *[Desk thumping]* It is not as if the Government does not know. If the Government does not know, we can say it is because they are ignorant. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is more worrisome is that the Government knows exactly what it is doing and it was designed in that way for a particular outcome, and the outcome is that a few selected persons could bypass the systems of checks and balances and prosper in a particular way. Then the Prime Minister comes and says bring the evidence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I came to this House and I showed you the Nipdec document, my friend from Oropouche says Nipdec is leaking like a sieve. Well, I am glad Nipdec is leaking because the public knows what is inside of Nipdec. I brought the Nipdec document—and I know it is a leak from Nipdec—and when the Government was confronted with the contents of the document even they themselves could not stomach the squandermania, so they resort to saying it is not true. So my friend from Oropouche gets up and says all projects have overruns

and he quotes overruns of a bygone era, but I was not talking about overruns, I was talking and I am still talking about the cost at which the contract was let. Overruns will come later for the final payment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was querying the fact about how they could award a contract where there are people pushing down the door wanting to bid and give the Government a better price and it is reinforcing the door so that the people cannot get it, and the Government awards the contract for a particular price which is much higher than the market price. There is a big difference between that and a cost overrun. A cost overrun means that you award the contract for a certain price, and during the life of the contract things happen such as the designs may change and rain might fall and so on, and then the price goes beyond what the contract was awarded for. That is overrun. At the stage of the award, before you break ground as you are awarding the contract, you must satisfy yourself that what you are awarding is fair and reasonable. That is what I was complaining about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, then do you know what? My friends from Nipdec take poor people's money because every month the little daily-paid worker; the little cleaner in the house; and all of us contribute to Nipdec. It is people's money. The National Insurance Board is not satisfied in giving away contracts 75 per cent above the going rate, while denying others from bidding to get a better rate. They are not satisfied with that. They must now take what little money is left and pay the press to publish lies, because in the Nipdec article, you would see them saying that they had nine contractors bidding—and Rowley is not speaking the truth—pre-qualifying and only one put in a bid and that is true. That is cause for concern. If there were nine contractors pre-qualifying and eight of them decide that this is a waste of time, the Government already knew who was going to get the contract. So I am not going to pay \$250,000 for documents knowing full well, I am not going to get the contract.

Hon. Member: Exactly.

Dr. K. Rowley: That should be cause for concern, but instead of it being cause for concern, the Government is using it for an excuse for what they have done. The bonding requirement was raised from 10 per cent to 25 per cent to ensure that certain contractors could not bid. The requirement was raised in terms of asset base by the bonding company to a certain level of millions of dollars to rule out certain bonding companies. The contract was tailored to suit one contractor and that is why they got one bid. That was the objective.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, then the Government went on to say that having ended up with one contractor, they negotiated the bid downwards. I was talking about

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CP9 and my friend from Oropouche was talking about CP9. Do you know what happened? The contractor bid \$183 million and the contract was awarded for \$183 million. There was no downward negotiation. So what Nipdec published in the newspaper was a lie. I will tell you something else too, my friend from Oropouche knows something that I do not know. He knows the price went up beyond \$183 million because the Member said the price is now \$209 million. Wherever the Minister got his information from the price is now \$209 million, so it is worse than we thought. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you understand? But then you do not know who to believe. As the Governments spend our moneys in this way, you do not know who to believe.

In the document all the contractors have is the bi-fold door, and our favourite contractor bid \$98,000 for the door and he got the contract awarded at \$98,000, and when he was confronted by that position, he said it was an error in the numbers. The contractor did not say there was no door, he said it was an error in the figure because even he cannot believe that he got a door for \$98,000, and then the famous Minister of Works and Transport, who is on record of not speaking the truth in this House on numerous occasions said there is no door. When the Minister could not answer about the door he made the door disappear.

Hon. Member: They thief it.

Dr. K. Rowley: When the Minister could not answer about the boat that cost us \$13 million and did not arrive, he says that is all in the past, let us go forward to another boat. That is all in the past. One decision by one government official, one famous Minister costs us \$13 million.

4.15 p.m.

I ask in this House: we have our fellow nationals in Tobago, at the end of the month they would have worked for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and they do not know if they are going to be paid. On many occasions now, it is a regular habit where government employees in Tobago are not being paid when payday comes and the Tobago House of Assembly has an overdraft of \$49 million. Nobody is addressing that. You ask the Minister, "Not me. I do not know anything." He is Minister of "know nothing", but he is quite happy every month to collect his pay cheque and everything you ask him, except about Mephistophelean, Cicero and their friends, he knows nothing about anything.

In the meantime, the Minister of Works and Transport could make one decision like that, against good advice, and it costs the country \$13 million for

nothing, *nada*, zilch, zip. That is how they are spending the public's money; they do not care a hoot and he tells you, "It is all in the past. That is \$13 million in the past. Just give us a chance for the future to spend." That is how they behave. That is how the public moneys have been spent under this Government.

I asked the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development in this House—I pointed out to him, because if I know, I am sure he knows—Are you aware that the Tobago House of Assembly has overdraft in Tobago of \$49 million as a result of which when the Tobago House of Assembly writes cheques, the cheques are bouncing in Tobago?

There is one department in Tobago in the Ministry of Health where the workers spend time writing over their own cheques because the cheques are stale-dated. They now have staff writing new cheques for stale-dated cheques. Are you all aware of that, that the Government is paying people to pick up old cheques and write new cheques because those cheques could not go to the bank because the Tobago House of Assembly is in permanent overdraft and nobody in the Government is saying anything about that? Do you know why? Because they believe they do not have a hope in hell of winning a Tobago seat, they do not care what anybody in Tobago feels or thinks.

It matters not to them that they sit where they sit in the way they look because of the two Tobago seats. It does not matter to them. All that matters is that nobody in Tobago could do them anything because they have no votes to get there anyway. It does not matter to them that the Tobago House of Assembly has found itself in a position where it is causing government employees not to be paid and those employees are demoralized and, therefore, are not providing the quality of service to the people of Tobago. They do not care about that.

The last person you can look to, for any relief, is the Member of Parliament for Tobago East, who seems to think that he inherited that as a part of his good works. It is called the Representation of the People Act. What put you in that seat was a law called the Representation of the People Act. You tell me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Dr. The Hon. M. Job*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: When the people of Tobago entrusted him with their franchise, his footwear was not glorious.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

He had to get time to go and get something worthy of the House. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to cast your mind back: How many occasions in this House did my colleague from Tobago East speak in representation of the people of Tobago East?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Never.

Dr. K. Rowley: At the same time, we are foregoing possible millions of dollars in VAT relief, guaranteed revenues. We are bringing laws here to forego that money. We are talking about a new boat for Tobago and we are asking where in the budget is the provision for the purchase of a new ferry? Not a soul could show us. But they talked loudly in the budget statement about a new ferry for Tobago. To be bought with what? Where is the provision for it? There is no provision in the budget for the purchase of any ferry and since my friend from Tobago East would respond after me, I would be delighted if he would contradict me. Show us in the budget documents the provision for the purchase of a new ferry because, if you cannot do that, that would be another instance of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, with the connivance of the Prime Minister and the Member for Tobago East, attempting to fool the people of Tobago and of Trinidad.

You ask yourself: Why are they doing this? They have money. They are borrowing money to mis-spend. They are borrowing money to make themselves look good, but their primary purpose is to spend that money to improve the quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and they have failed signally.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport, like his colleagues, likes to play smart with foolishness. When you call on them to account for how they are spending the money, they take it upon themselves to think that all of us are dodos. The draft Cabinet Note that is circulating around the country, tells the Cabinet that the cost of the airport terminal building to date is \$1.3 billion. Our friend from Oropouche speaks in this Parliament during the budget debate and he has some wand with which he reduced it to \$1.1 billion. The Minister of Works and Transport is even better. He is out there telling the public, "Do not bother with Rowley. It is within budget and on time, August 31. I did not tell you which year and it is only costing \$700 million. Where did this billion-dollar story come from?" Is that not what he said? The airport terminal cost \$700 million. It is the other things that cost a few million dollars more. It is the support.

So, Mr. Speaker, you are going to build a house and when your wife asks you what is the cost of the house, you give her a figure that excludes the roof, the plumbing, the driveway and probably the windows. That is the behaviour of the Minister of Works and Transport. Hear his thinking, hoping that we think in the same way, too: the construction of the building, quite rightly, is approximately \$700 million but in attempting to build an airport terminal building, the building in itself is of no use. You must have utilities—the ramps and water. All of those things, incidentally, were in the original estimate when the contract was awarded. [*Desk thumping*] All of them were in there and that price was \$720 million. Today, it is now \$1.3 billion so he, now, is separating them. He puts the building by itself. [*Interruption*]

He is saying and I heard him telling the press, it is the support services that caused it to go above, but the support services are only \$77 million plus VAT. In a \$1.3 billion expense, the utilities only come up to \$77 million plus 15 per cent VAT. Even if you accept what he is saying that you separate the support services, how do you explain the other \$1.2 billion? What happened then?

But that is the kind of mind game that the Government is playing because every time a Minister of Government speaks an untruth, it takes a whole army of researchers in the press, the Opposition and elsewhere to dig up and report it. We use our energies and the country uses its energy trying to find out the real truth because every government spokesperson makes a habit of not telling the country the truth. He, now, has reduced the cost of the airport. But if you wanted to build a new terminus, there would have been no need for the other expenses. They are all part of it and they were all budgeted in there. They were all there.

Mr. Speaker, I can point to so many instances where this Government has got its priorities wrong. One of their apologists has a habit of calling in every day, saying that the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not have to pay for the desalination expenses. We do not have to pay for InnCogen. Somebody loves us, so they will come into the country, build a desalination plant, incur the expense on to their own account and give us the water.

They seem to forget that everything has a cost and somebody has to pay. If we are buying the water, we are having to pay for the investment and if the investment is overpriced, then it will show up in the price you pay for the water. If you give up your earnings to earn half of what you are earning, it is giving up something. But, they go out there, believing that people in this country are stupid, that we do not know how to add two and two; we do not know how to assist our circumstance; therefore, they can tell us anything.

They all sit there, while a small clique in the Cabinet directs this mis-spending of public funds, because they have been presented with the evidence time and time again, but they do not care. As far as they are concerned, they have a mechanism which will get them re-elected and the mechanism involves using the same mis-spent money which will find itself into their election campaign, hoping that they will be re-elected to continue the job they have done so badly. That is their expectation.

Mr. Partap: We will.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if they have any faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I know they do not care about the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but I do not know if they have any faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I have faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago that they will examine this Government's performance and that they will examine this Government's silence on matters of real consequence.

For example, we have with us here today the privilege of the Prime Minister in a lovely tie. I wonder if he will want to enter this debate where we are discussing the public's money where the airport expense is of such great worry to all of us who have to pay for it. I have wondered if he will get up and tell us what was that discussion he had with the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, which was so obvious, which caused the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development to go to Miami to see Birk Hillman for a private visit. We have that great anomaly of a Minister of Government in this country leaving here to go to Miami to ask a \$2 million company to talk to a multimillion-dollar company for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Birk Hillman, a \$2 million company going to Miami to talk to American Airlines on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and they want us to believe that. Since he is here now, I wonder if he will enter the debate and explain that to us.

[Mr. Speaker rises]

I am winding up, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: You are winding up. Okay.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, as we proceed to tea, all I can say is, we have shown enough to the people on the other side and we cannot support this. No way are we prepared to assist the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development to assist his friends in this way. Help is at hand. The election is just around the corner.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended until 5.00 o'clock.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Manning: Plato! Chinua Achibe.

The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East shouts “Plato”. It stimulates my mind, to use this occasion to warn the nation, that what we are going to hear from now, as we experienced this afternoon in Parliament, is the use of Parliament for the purpose of propaganda.

We had a Bill to deal with the question of taxes, and by what means we should raise taxes: the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000. That Motion was the excuse for a whole afternoon of dithering and prevarication on sundry subjects, that has to do with the hustings, with electioneering.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometime—I cannot remember the date—the people in Rome formed an organization that was called “Sachra Congregtio de Propaganda Fide”. The purpose of that institution was to damage the cause of any government, it was to disseminate information and distribute allegations, with the purpose of damaging a government or any institution which interfered with the propagation of the faith. That is where we got the word in the English Language “propaganda”: you disseminate allegations and information with the purpose to damage. Of course, in so doing, you can assist your own cause. That is what propaganda is all about.

I want to remind this honourable House that between now and the election day, we are going to see much, much more of this: dissemination of allegations, dissemination of innuendo disguised as facts, and dissemination of symbols that are going to focus the mind on emotive issues, that have nothing to do with the matter of substance. That is the purpose of the Parliament, in the view of some people, from now until election day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind you—and people in this House who have experienced what has gone on here this evening must be reminded—that, in 1989 and 1990, all the opposition parties formed themselves into a thing “Sopo”. That was the point of Sopo. Sopo was not there to guide the mind as to what the programme of the government was: it was to say that everything the government was doing was not good. Something like the National Investment Company,

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which recently has come back as the NEL, they opposed it, all of them. There was Morris Marshall who marched with Abu Bakr up and down the streets of the East/West Corridor and all around Port of Spain. They all went to the Mosque on Fridays. All of them arm in arm, Errol McLeod. The purpose was not to dignify the information that was being given to people: it was to spread propaganda. It worked like a charm. At the end of the day people got killed: the gentleman whose picture is at the back of this House, Mr. Des Vignes; the President got shot, he is still suffering from the consequences of that; Port of Spain was burnt down and many people were put in distress, because we were not dealing with leading the mind to issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard this evening a whole lot of propaganda about the fact that this Order has nothing to do with taxes. Is that truth? Is it a fact? It is a relation of the truth? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am averring to you that the purpose of those statements were merely propaganda, it had nothing to do with discussing taxation.

As I am on that, I want to encourage people to focus their mind on the statements made, especially, by the Members for Diego Martin Central and Diego Martin West concerning the relation of this Order to revenues. In particular, the Member for Diego Martin West said on sundry occasions in his presentation that we were giving away revenue. He suggested to the people that the whole point of this Act was to, in a very unfair manner, allow some people to not pay VAT. There is no such intention in this Order!

5.10 p.m.

There is no such intention in this Order to focus the mind on giving away goodies to friends of the Government or friends anywhere. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that forces me to come to terms with what the Member for Diego Martin Central was talking about: fiscal policy, fiscal imprudence, the fact that the PNM were the great fiscalists of this country and that PNM policy was the best thing that Trinidad and Tobago ever had. What can he mean by that?

If we look at the history of Trinidad and Tobago from 1956 to date, we will discern a tax policy on the part of the PNM that was decidedly, unambiguously redistributive in nature. In other words, the philosophy behind the People's National Movement's tax policy was that if you have too much money, we are going to take it from you and give it to somebody else. In fact, one of the late greats said that our tax policy, our fiscal policy is to take from those who have had too much for too long and give it to those who have had too little for too long. That was

their tax policy, it was a re-distributive policy: it had nothing to do with focusing taxation on what a state had to do in order to become a state.

This Government and all those that followed 1986 were in a philosophical mode that was antithetical to that PNM fiscal policy, which was re-distributive in nature. When the PNM came back into power in 1991 with a vengeance they overturned it and they said so on the hustings: "Our policy is always to tax the rich to give to the poor," and they raised taxes in 1991 and 1992. Were it not for the implications, and should I even say the blackmail of the International Monetary Fund and the international community, they would have continued raising taxes, because that is a part of their philosophy. It is important that people understand these things.

I am not dealing with propaganda, no; I am not dealing with propaganda, I am dealing with facts that you can discern if you take the time to go and read the documents. Read, for example, the book produced called *In the People's Interest* by the Member for Diego Martin Central and the late Morris Marshall. [Crosstalk] If you read that you will again get all the confirmation that you need, that PNM fiscal policy is about tax and spend and tax and re-distribute. They do not have an idea that fiscal policy is one of the most important instruments in setting a country up for efficiency, wealth creation, for productivity growth that is going to benefit everybody, and this is a grave departure from the philosophy of the People's National Movement that we must understand.

So when we have a measure like this that is not punitive in nature and at the same time is assisting the Board of Inland Revenue and all the agencies concerned, to stop wasting time trying to run down people who are delinquent for whatever reason, and give them an option with penalties that would provide an incentive for them to come in and pay, they cannot understand it, because it is not consistent with their philosophy. Their philosophy is a kind of aggressive pursuit of taxation as if it is the key, the cornerstone, as the Member for Diego Martin West did say, it is the core of their fiscal policy: increase taxation, so we need to understand that.

We need to understand that the Board of Inland Revenue is operating in the year 2000 in a world where you need to modernize. We are in a situation where any sensible person must ask himself the question every day in this country: do we have an appropriate amount of competent bureaucrats, competent, efficient and modernized officials in every state agency equal to the task of electronic commerce, equal to the task of running a globalized economy where tariff barriers are going down and where you trade on the Internet? So if we are to do all these

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things we have to have people directed to those tasks. We do not want hundreds of people running down old taxes that go back to 1994 or 1995, old taxes that, as the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development would say, "The candle would cost more than the funeral." We do not want people wasting time, as I said, looking for taxes that when you collect them, the cost of collection might very well be, and in most cases, inordinately more than the revenue you collect.

When you impose a restraint warrant you bring in the courts. When you have to lock up people, you bring in the police, you bring in the courts, you bring in the Board of Inland Revenue, and all these persons have to be paid. It takes up a lot of time, you allocate a lot of resources and I am asking: What is the cost benefit of the activity, especially at a time when you should be directing your resources to modernizing the revenue collection capability of the Government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by increasing the rates of interest from 15 to 20 per cent, those taxpayers who fail to take advantage of the window of opportunity that is now offered from August 28, 2000 to the next eight months will have to understand the following: that the rate of interest of 20 per cent will apply from the day on which they were required to make the payment, and if there are outstanding taxes from, let us say, May 1, 1994 to the month that we are talking about eight months from now, the 20 per cent interest rate would apply from May 1, 1994 up to the date on which the taxes are actually paid.

We are saying that the moratorium also has an incentive in it, that if you did not pay during the moratorium period, all the back taxes that you owed, the current interest will apply. It is not to say, as the Member for Diego Martin West is trying to tell us, that this is purely a measure designed for special interests, for friends of the Government, as they were saying. We need to get that out of our mind completely.

At the same time that they are saying all this, I am very confused with the ideas that come from the three speakers that spoke over there. At the same time they are talking about the fundamentals, these are their words: "God help us that the fundamentals of the economy are sound; God help us that the fundamentals of the economy are good." Well, how can the fundamentals be sound and good if they are alleging at the same time that since 1995 until now we have been engaging in an orgy of squandermania, of fiscal imprudence, increase of domestic and national debt? How come we have been doing this every year and the fundamentals are still strong? Obviously, these people do not understand what they are talking about.

If you are talking about the fundamentals of the economy, the fundamentals must also include—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order!

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: —some measure of the debt to equity ratio of the country as a whole. It must have something to do with how interest rates are relating to debt, to government borrowing. He even alluded to that when he was talking about crowding out. He was talking about the crowding out phenomenon as if he is an expert on the matter, but if you listen and analyze carefully you will understand that there is a level of intellectual bankruptcy and misunderstanding that demonstrates that lack of knowing. Let me go over that, Mr. Deputy Speaker: if, indeed, since 1995 what we were seeing was an orgy of squandermania, government borrowing and increasing the domestic and foreign debt, it must have impacted on interest rates. There is no way that the allegations, the propaganda made on that side can have any veracity, can in any way be related to truth, and real interest rates have not been taking a dizzying, vertiginous climb into the stratosphere: they must have.

Let me say that again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If, indeed—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Tobago East did not interrupt anybody when they were making their contribution. [*Interruption*] I know, you were talking a little loud and the people from *Hansard* are looking at me, they cannot get everything. Member for Tobago East, please continue.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: I did start off to say that between now and the election day, this Parliament will be used as the principal forum for the dissemination of propaganda and of allegations which are dedicated to one single purpose, which is to mislead the public emotively into lassoing themselves, as I like to say, behind the People's National Movement bandwagon. That is legitimate, that is the nature of Opposition politics. I presume that the Members on this side when they were in Opposition would have adopted the same tactic. I have no doubt about that. If you look at the *Hansard* you would see a chronology of the behaviour of Opposition politicians; you would see in Jamaica, the United States, in England, anywhere. You are in the Opposition so you can say anything, if that anything is going to get you in power.

This is about power; it is about competition. This is not a class in logic; this is not a class in economics; this is not a class where you get marks and you get graded. This is a class where the competition is taking place; this is the cockpit,

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the pivot of the competition for power, and when you are in that situation you use the opportunities available to you to spread propaganda, to damage the Government; this is what they have done. Everybody should understand that, and I want it on record.

I see all of them over there criticizing me egregiously, unfairly, trying to damage my credibility, which they cannot do. I would not allow them to do it. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: What credibility do you have?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: I am going to take the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to challenge them to desist, because if they do not desist they will be grievously hurt by that behaviour. I want to leave you to paddle your own canoe, but if you are going to drag me into your war, you will drag me in on the wrong side and you will suffer for it; I am telling you, I am warning you.

Let me go over that again, because I am saying that on the allegations made here, if, in fact, the expenditure, the fiscal posture of this Government was what they said it was, they could not consistently at the same time be saying that the fundamentals are correct. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot have a situation where the exchange rate is stable because of the management of inflows, outflows and government borrowing too. I want to concede that, I want to say that. These people, because they do not understand economics, might have read some textbooks, *Economics 101*, and told themselves that they understood economics; they have not studied the subject.

You cannot have a situation like you have in Trinidad and Tobago where the exchange rate has been stable, because of the way the Government has been spending money and borrowing money—notice that I want to underline it, and borrowing money—in order to keep this thing how it is, and at the same time these people over there are telling you everything is awry, everything is wrong, all the fundamentals are good except that the Government is a squandermania government, a government inebriated with corruption, indulging, grovelling in the most egregious forms of corruption that you can ever imagine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing is further from the truth on the basis of the evident fact. Let me say this about corruption: we have three speakers and this is the election campaign for the next couple of months going up to election: corruption, corruption, corruption, *ad nauseam*; that is what they are going to be talking about. Not a word about where this country is, where this Government is and where the country should be; how you engage their minds to deal with the

evident fact that many people in this country cannot be employed gainfully or cannot be employed with incomes that are consistent with their demands in terms of their family and things like that, simply because they were badly done by the policies of that government.

Let me explain what I mean. Again, I would have wished that they did not raise the issue. They came this afternoon again talking about education and education. I want it on the record for the nth time, because between now and the election I will say this again, I will bring the evidence. If you look at the accredited evidence, this is not propaganda, this is fact. You can go to the University of the West Indies, you can go into the World Bank reports, or you can go into the reports that they have in the Ministry of Education, all of them tell you a story that belies all their claims.

Listen to the most fundamental implication of this story: under the People's National Movement this society evolved into a caste society, where you had certain people in certain areas, certain enclaves in this country who from generation to generation reminded us, remind us—I should use the present tense—of that biblical injunction in Exodus where it says: the sins of the fathers will visit the children even unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people in the PNM heartland did not do God anything, they did God nothing, but their generation, from generation to generation, have been suffering and have been put into a lower caste because these people either lived in denial or deliberately sought to exploit the—should I say the gullibility—the loyalty, the frailty, the weakness, those social fractures that put people in a point of weakness, they sought to exploit the better to keep themselves in power; like somebody said, they were the jackass they used to ride to the mountain top of power.

With the consequence that when you read the reports, you are going to see things like this: when you take any period, five years ago, 10 years ago, today, and you look at the records for the Common Entrance Examination, how many marks do children, say in a constituency like Laventille East, West, South, North, get in the Common Entrance Examination? Fifty-five marks; that is the fact. When you take a sample of children, call them so-called, I like to say, East Indians, how many marks do they get? Sixty-seven marks. How many marks do Syrians, Chinese and so-called French Creole get? More than 72 marks, that is the evident fact; that is not propaganda. These are the things that they do not like to deal with.

When they come here talking about education in a motion like this dealing with taxation, they are setting themselves up. If you are dealing with facts, even living in the real world of facts, you will never talk about that. But they want to use this Parliament purely to go out there talking about corruption, and "dey corrupt and corrupt and dey tief and dey corrupt", every day that is what they want to talk about, and it is evidently not true.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the history of this country from 1956 to date, we can deal with corruption merely by coming into Parliament and shouting down on the other side. The people on this side were doing it when they were in Opposition and those before them, the NAR, the former Member for Tobago East, all of them. When they were on the other side they were shouting corruption, from 1956, and even before that in the colonial days with Albert Gomes and others.

If you look in the *Hansard* record you will see Dr. Williams and the PNM in 1955/1956 coming up to the election how they pilloried Albert Gomes, Roy Joseph, Norman Khan and all these people. Within two years, they were travelling more than Albert Gomes and Norman Khan you can imagine possible. Within two years they were spending more money than Roy Joseph and the others combined could have spent. These are the evident facts, but nobody remembers that, nobody deals with that. They come here and talk about corruption.

The point I am making is that to deal with corruption, the World Bank, the IMF, Transparency International all these people who deal with law, do research and have reports published in French, German and Spanish about corruption being a global problem. There is a list, a lead table for corruption where Transparency International says that Nigeria and India are always competing for No. 1 and No. 2 positions in the lead table for corruption and the people from India look like the Member for Caroni East and the people from Nigeria mainly look like me. It has nothing to do with whether your hair is straight or kinky, not at all. It has to do with culture.

I am saying when the PNM is talking about corruption they never look back. Like somebody says when you point your finger so, four of them are pointing at yourself. They never look back at themselves to ask: "What did we do since 1956 to deal with the culture, the institutions, the legal apparatus, the framework, the skeleton of law that must sustain that kind of culture that would be inimical or subversive of the propagation and profits that politicians and bureaucrats would

draw out of corruption? Nothing. They do not come in here to talk about that, because they never did.

I quoted from Dr. Eric Williams' *Forged from the Love of Liberty* where Dr. Williams said—I cannot remember the page now, but he was saying when he tried to bring in integrity legislation, people warned him that if he brought in the integrity legislation that he wanted, half the country would have to migrate including those in the Cabinet. Dr. Williams said so. I did not tell him to say so. I did not write his speech, I was not around. From that time to this day, you are still talking about corruption without having been able to show one single institution they built, one law that they passed, one lecture that any one of them gave to anybody anywhere in this country that would change the culture of corruption. So let us forget that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us go to the country to explain that the next election we are coming up to, the issue should be whether or not the prosperity of this country is based on a different idea, a different set of visions about the possible. Whether or not this Government is indeed trying to carnalize the mind, to change attitudes so when we are looking at education, they are doing what I said when I intervened. We need to look at pre-school education, we need to look at primary school education.

The Member for Diego Martin East made a very alarming statement which I thought was very sensible when he said that beyond the spring, oil prices by all the experts are estimated to go well below US \$20 per barrel.

Mr. Imbert: I did not say that.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Deputy Speaker, they said so, it is in the *Hansard*, and I wrote it down. I am saying that is a very important statement and it is important in this context. Because of propaganda again, there was a situation in this country where people were murdered based on the allegation and propaganda that Robinson and the NAR were callous, heartless, wicked and unfeeling. They were vindictive, wicked and unfeeling for wanting to bring in NIC, for wanting to cut salaries, for wanting to reduce subsidies, for wanting to do all the things that the PNM after the NAR followed, that this Government is continuing to follow and by their own admission in the budget debate, that long history of consistently following the policies that began in the period 1986—1991, is why we are in the state that we are in today.

The reason I am raising this thing about oil prices is because all of them are inciting people about a 10-point plan to pay teachers all the money they ask for;

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paying public servants all the money they ask for, they will do this, they will do that, based on current oil prices. When they incite people to believe that, and oil prices fall to \$19 a barrel, we are back to where we were in 1985/1986 when oil prices went to \$9 a barrel and the level of payments that were embedded in wage contracts before that time when Mr. Bunny Padmore and all these people were telling people that oil prices would go to \$100 a barrel. Because they thought that oil prices would go maybe to an exponential or linear curve forever, they formed wage contracts, they put levels of subsidies, they had a way of fiscal policy that could not be sustained so the country went into a lot of pain. When people forthrightly and manfully tried to deal with it, to follow the advice that William Demas, Victor Bruce, Frank Barsotti and the guy who was the Governor of Central Bank in Washington—what is his name?—Euric Bobb, Joyce Alcantara, Harewood and all of them. The advice they gave them, nobody discussed these things because they were telling them in the future, if you have to borrow domestically and if you have to maintain the plant and equipment in this country because of depreciation and maintenance, if you have to meet the commitments of old age pension and all these things, you cannot at the same time sustain the level of payments that you have for wages, emoluments and all these things so you have to have some kind of cutting back. It is written down in black and white. They never heeded it, and put this country through a lot of pain.

I am saying this today because I want people to understand the prescience and the wisdom of the Member for Diego Martin East to introduce this possibility that oil prices can fall because the country has to understand that when we are thinking in terms of oil stabilization, fiscal prudence, and when we are thinking about the ideas of imposing this 10-point plan that the Member for San Fernando East is promising when he becomes Prime Minister, we have to put it in a proper context that must include our history and our understanding of the past. We do not have to be Hagellian philosophers to understand what Hagel or somebody around his time or before him said. When we do not remember our history, we are doomed to repeat those mistakes. We have to understand that.

I have on my notepad just after that, where the Member for Diego Martin West was saying that he is a bright fellow. I heard him say he has two first class honours, so I am sure he understands when you divide 100 by zero what you get. I am sure I do not have to ask him that. He is a bright fellow. So on this matter of the \$1.3 billion on the airport, if it were \$1.5 billion or \$2 billion, at the end of the day you are getting an airport. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the *Hansard* to record what I say because I am not one who is here to spread propaganda. When I say what I say over the years I say it very studiously in great calculation. I am saying whether the airport is \$1.1 or \$1.2, \$1.5 or \$2 billion as they say, at the end of the day you get an airport. So for that expenditure, you will get an airport and it will cost whatever the figure is. If \$1.1 billion is spent, divide 1.1 by 1 and you will get the cost of an airport, if it is \$2 billion, you divide \$2 billion by 1, and the airport costs \$2 billion, but they spent \$100 million on Project Pride, when you divide that by zero what do you get? Their airport cost an infinite amount of money. That is what you get. Simple arithmetic. They spent \$100 million to build an airport that was never built so their investment to output ratio is a 100 divided by zero which is equal to infinity.
[Interruption]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members of the Opposition, when you all are doing the same thing nobody is challenging it. Member for Tobago East keep going.
[Desk thumping]

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not understand. These people have no notion, no idea of justice. That is one of the characteristics of the Members opposite, they have no idea of justice. I have been here for three years now and not one fraction of a second have I ever interfered with, or interrupted any one of them. I have had to spend countless hours here, I have sat here patiently, I have suffered under the diatribe, the effluent of nonsense, I read my books, I read my papers, I listen off and on. I do not bother with them. As soon as I am on my feet, not to spread propaganda, but to lead the mind to a logical and dispassionate analysis and understanding of the rubbish that goes on over there, they start to disturb. I must not speak. Why are they so unfair, and unjust? Why are they so unmannerly? Why do you not just sit and listen?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going through their notes because I took notes and I want to deal with all the allegations and statements before I get back to the substance of this matter. The Member for Diego Martin Central started off again in a mode of calumny and a set of interjections dedicated to belittle—nothing to do with the Bill. I was in Tobago yesterday and if indeed I came to my office this morning and found I had to be here, I do not know that I am not equal to the task, so if there were a bit of hiccoughs, so what? In the life of any one of us situations arise. So what is the problem? Why are you seeking to exploit a little difficulty that is not a great tragedy or disaster to spread politics and propaganda, and more than that to try to humiliate and belittle people unjustly and unfairly? But you will

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suffer for it, for the next half an hour or more that I have here, I will make sure I punish you.

I am on my notes concerning the Member for Diego Martin West where he said to show him where there was a variation of taxes in the written law, and he went on to say the Motion is about forgiveness. Indeed, the Motion is about that.

This cannot be done via a tax order, it must be done via the Bill. Some Finance Bill maybe he is talking about. It has been attempted because of the general election, the Ministry of Finance is attempting to let them off the hook, this is an avenue for favours—so annoying, the rape of the Treasury. We cannot go on in this way, we have now transparent corruption. In 1995, the Member for Couva South had much to say about this, now he talks about debt forgiveness. We have to understand that one owes principal and interest over years and he goes on like that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did say in the presentation of the Motion that this issue is ultimately about raising taxes. There is a gentleman, I cannot remember his name, but President Reagan had just come into office, when this name came up. I think it is spelt L-a-f-f-e-r. I understand that Laffer and some other economist were in some bar in Washington somewhere, or maybe in some university campus and Laffer scribbled this curve and showed them where by reducing taxes you will increase revenue. Since then, that kind of idea and even before that because it was my reading of the issue since I was studying economics. A long time there has been argument whether or not by reducing taxes you do not ultimately provide a greater incentive for compliance and, therefore, collect more revenues. So Laffer was in fact late and when Reagan and Thatcher and these people came with the idea, they were also intellectually latecomers to the idea, but in fact, in terms of a serious intervention by a policy-making institution by the government in Washington, or the government in London around the time of Reagan and Thatcher was when this idea caught on. That was the time too when the PNM was still advocating themselves as the greatest benefactors of the poor by taxing the rich to redistribute the poor. They still do not understand these things, so he goes on like that.

The idea I raise this afternoon has to do with cleaning up the books, providing incentives for compliance. Over the last five years, there has been a progressive reduction in corporation taxes and taxes for individuals. Generally, we are doing that in order to create the conditions for greater compliance and revenue flows because when you increase wealth, when you give people an opportunity to make profit, which is something alien to PNM's philosophy. I want to emphasize that I

have always—if people remembered the years that I have been in the vineyard labouring—been telling people that throughout the Caribbean, we have wasted too much time with high taxes, too much time with government pretending that they could feed the poor, they could be like the former Prime Minister Robinson said; the Government cannot be nanny and “tanty” to everybody. In fact, any time a government tries to do that it will end up where they ended up in the Soviet Union, like how they ended up all over Africa, vast areas of Latin America, they call Venezuela a beggar sitting on a pot of gold notwithstanding all the resources they have. Primarily, because governments never understood that what they ought to be doing is creating conditions for people to do the best they can to become wealthy, to create wealth, to invest, to increase productivity.

5.40 p.m.

This is what this measure is all about. This measure is not to waste a lot of Board of Inland Revenue people’s time chasing down VAT collections that you did not pay since 1994 or you did not do this since 1994. We are not saying that you do not owe people. This measure that is introduced today did not say that we are avoiding, we are waiving, we are abolishing forever the claims of the Board of Inland Revenue, or the claims of the Government on the taxes you should legitimately pay. It is a forgiveness; there is a definite time period and there is an incentive built into the procedure so that the people who are so affected will come in and pay.

But no, they go all over the world and waffle from idea to idea without any internal logic or coherence, trying to claim that this measure is merely to influence or to benefit three large contractors who have to pay VAT. Nothing of the sort is the truth and the public must know that. The public must also know that the idea to spend all afternoon with three major frontline speakers of the Government—*[Interruption]* three frontline speakers of the Opposition, sorry. It is late in the day, and you all have tired me out listening to you so my brain is not working quite well. Do you know how much torture it is to sit here and listen to you and you for four hours or something like that? So that, Mr. Speaker, I am saying, the reason why the three frontline speakers of the Opposition spent all afternoon regaling us with this idea of corruption; with this idea of giveaways, is because that is all they are going to spend for the next two or three months, or however, whenever the Prime Minister announces; that is their line to go to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They have no intention to go to the people to say what their fiscal policy is; they have no intention to go to the people to say what their monetary policy is; they have no intention to go to the people to say what

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their training programme policy is; what they are going to do about vocational training; what they are going to do about pre-school training; what they are going to do to prepare the people in their Bantu stands in the East/West Corridor; what they are going to do to create a greater cultural competitiveness. So that, in fact, those cultural handicaps that lead us—and I want to say it again. I hope the Minister of Education is going to listen to me. I had asked the Minister of Education for the merit list of the Common Entrance for this year. I want it, because I want to use it in Parliament.

We have to get people to understand that success in education is not about who has straight hair and kinky hair, it is about cultural handicap and lack of it. It is what explains the fact that Jews are less than two per cent of the population of the United States of America but, nevertheless, more than 50 per cent of the Nobel Prizes ever won by Americans, were won by Jews. It is what explains the fact that the community who have recently immigrated to the United States from India in the last 30 years, have now eclipsed Jews as the most educated and the per-capita wealthiest group. What explains that is cultural programming. It is what explains the fact that the Cubans have gone to Miami in the last 30 years and taken over the place.

It is all these things. I want to re-emphasize it, because the PNM as the Opposition are wasting our time with propaganda and focusing the minds on foolishness about corruption, have nothing to tell their own people about how they are going to reduce the cultural handicaps that they have nurtured; that they have succoured; that they have built up over the years to leave their community handicapped and deficient and unable to compete in a multi-ethnic society like Trinidad and Tobago.

So that much of what we are seeing in this country that would be at a disadvantage to all of us, is a consequence of PNM abandonment; of PNM neglect of their own people, and they want to use this election period to go and spread propaganda about corruption and fiscal mismanagement. I would not have them do it. I want them to deal with issues. I want them to go and explain to the people of Trou Macaque, Laventille, Africa and Caledonia, why it is their children are not represented proportionately in Fatima and St. Mary's College; why it is they are not represented proportionately in the school of engineering and the school of medicine. I want them to go and tell them that, because I am going to go and do it. If they do not intend to stop this foolishness of using the Parliament to spread propaganda, I will go. I will take up my microphone again and go on the road. I

am warning you. Stop using the Parliament to threaten me! Okay. Do you understand?

He goes on—*[Interruption]* no manners, again. I do not interfere with the Member for La Brea when he is speaking. He takes off his jacket as though he wants to fight people and do all sorts of things. I sit here quietly and amuse myself, I entertain myself and I leave him alone. Please, forgive me. Give me a break! Just let me talk my talk. Okay? Do you understand?

He goes on to talk about how the umbrella has a lot of holes and he is saying that when the Minister of Finance said “done the Budget speech”, this oil stabilization fund was a hoax. He is going to the country again with another piece of propaganda. Mr. Deputy Speaker, fairness is not something that is really evident in the world, and you know, some political and historical philosophers and writers have often warned us, and I want to warn you again, that it is not true that truth always prevails.

You know when people were in the gas chambers—I have just finished reading a book by a Jewish medical doctor who was coerced and sentenced to death by the Angel of Death, Yusuf Mandela, that German doctor of the concentration camp. I cannot remember the name of the author of the book now but he was there. He recounted an instance where a bundle of Jews were to go into the gas chamber. They were assembled before and the leader, who was a Rabbi, was telling them that “We do not understand this thing. We really do not understand what was going on, but we have to trust God.” Imagine me of Job, you know that this nastiness was going on, how can you still trust in your God? In the same kind of way, I am saying the whole history that went before, they are forgetting it because the PNM had billions of dollars. They had all kinds of special funds. By 1986 when the NAR Government came into power there was no money there. All the money was squandered; all the money was frittered away. We do not want to go back to that, so the idea of an oil stabilization fund is an eminently useful and sensible idea. Instead of them understanding and give some credibility to what is going on and get up there and argue, “Let us make it happen for sure. Before they do that, they are there spreading propaganda again, saying that this thing is a big hoax, and the umbrella has holes. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was sitting here, or maybe not in Parliament here.

But I would put this on the record that in order to set up this oil stabilization fund the way the Government wants to set it up, there must be legislation. To have legislation you have to get the people to write it; you have to put lawyers

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together. All these things take time. So that between the point of deciding that you want an oil stabilization fund and getting the legal infrastructure and superstructure to make it fact, there are a lot of things to do. So that the mechanism that the Minister of Finance explained to this honourable House, is an interim measure on the way to doing that. The instructions have already gone out to the Attorney General to make sure the legislation to put the fund in place is there. So that in the long run we will, indeed, not be in a position where, by the time the legislation is done we do not have any money to put in the fund. We want to do it now for many reasons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the idea again—you remember I quoted where the Member for Diego Martin West had said that expert opinion is saying that oil prices are going to go back down and are likely to be at or under \$20 per barrel after spring next year. We want to telegraph to the population that we do not believe, like they believed in 1978, that oil prices are going to go on forever. You have to bring people down to the real world. Many of the problems that this country had after 1986 and indeed, until now—we still have lagged effects of that—was because the expectations of the population were built up in a certain kind of way and those expectations were not consistent with the reality, and that put the country through endless pain and suffering, even death and destruction.

This Government, responsible as it is, is trying to do everything, not to build up expectations but, in fact, to change expectations, to make them more consistent with reality; to make them more consistent with real possibilities; to get people to understand that it is not only individuals, not only them but their Government must take the lead in terms of saving for the rainy day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the speaking time of the hon. Member be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

5.50 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not need applause. The record will applaud me and history will applaud me. You know, somebody said “History will absolve me”. The history records will be there because I might very well do them all a favour by printing what they said and printing what I said this afternoon and let it become available to the public because I cannot depend on the media to do that. They never print anything I say. I know why.

Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were saying that we do not know anything about what this measure is going to do and the Government is not that silly. I am sure that the Cabinet, the Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance, myself—all of us are concerned about what the measure is going to do and we believe that by granting the concession during this specified period we expect the taxpayers would want to make good on their outstanding obligations. We expect that taxpayers will receive the benefit and see the wisdom in coming forward and taking advantage of the moratorium, and all things being equal—what we would say, other things being equal—the Board of Inland Revenue has an expectation that at least \$90 million would be collected during the period of the concession.

I want it to be understood quite clearly that the issues they raised on the other side that we did not know, we do not have an evaluation of what we are going to collect or what we owe, perhaps they might be more right. I like to be very honest and very frank. I mean, given the chore of listing every taxpayer, going back over all those files and all those records and coming up with the total of how much outstanding taxes are there, I do not know that I can say quite sincerely at this point that this has been done. Also, I do not know that if I had the substantive post of Minister of Finance I would really want to allocate resources to that task because, given the way my mind works, I am always thinking in terms of what is the benefit for the expenditure in terms of time, in terms of resources, in terms of manpower and in terms of opportunity cost.

What do I mean by that? If there is somebody doing that kind of addition, it means that they cannot be doing something else more productive and more consistent with modernizing. So there is a total cost in terms of time lost, in terms of wages and all of that and in terms of the opportunity cost of the benefits one might get, and I do not know that in my way of thinking it would be a judicious way to spend taxpayers' resources to go chasing them down. Nonetheless, we are sure in our estimates that we are going to get at least \$90 million out of this thing. Yet they come here and, instead of focussing the mind in a very logical and consistent way and all these things, they spend their time talking about how "We making propaganda". That is the Member for Diego Martin East.

He is an engineer. He was the Minister of Works, you know, bright man that he is. I know who his father is, a very good friend of mine and I hope he remains so for a long while, but I am worrying whether I should extend the same favour to his son. He does not seem to deserve it. He is a bright man. He had good opportunities. He studied engineering and all of that. He was the Minister of Works but he could not think of a simple idea like the St. Ann's roundabout,

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something that cost a couple thousand dollars. Hundreds of thousands of man-hours are saved every year, yet he could not think that up, but he “bright like a light”, you know—too bright. All his brilliance, yet he comes into the House to talk a lot of foolishness.

He is the great propagandist. He reminds me of—what is the fella’s name in Germany—Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich. Every time he gets up I remember Goebbels, you understand? It seems to be his particular mission, to just spread propaganda in this Parliament. You know, he was an engineer—bright man. He went to the University of the West Indies and did coursework and things like that, did a lot of design and things like that, but he could not design another bridge by Caroni so that traffic could flow both ways. So under his watch, every day there were thousands of man-hours being lost by people having to pass in a single lane over the Caroni Bridge. He did nothing about it, you know, but he comes here talking a lot of foolishness about this mad idea of a—Mr. Deputy Speaker, one must have a lot of patience to deal with the antics and the rantings and ravings—to deal with the mad antics of the people from that side of this Parliament.

I do not understand them. He is the brightest of the bright. He boasts of how smart he is, but a simple thing like the Cascade Roundabout he could not think up, and an even simpler idea like another bridge over the Caroni River he could not think up. This Government has done many of those simple, little, common-sense, as he called them, mad ideas that have caused great relief. They have unburdened thousands of people every day from stress in this country. [*Desk thumping*] He could not think them up but comes here and wants to spend from now till the next election spreading propaganda. I promise that Member and that Member and that Member that I will deny them that opportunity, even if it means taking up my microphone again. I warn them; spending millions to inconvenience people. The Member for Arouca, I told him already when one is in ABC do not come up to Form I, right. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Which radio station are you talking about?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Any one.

Hon. Member: Radio 102?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Any one. I will take them all. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the measure that we are instituting here is not a measure coming out of flaccid minds. It is not a measure that is dedicated to spreading propaganda. It is a measure that was thought out in terms of engaging all the people in processes of,

as they like to say, governance or transparency. So that with respect to this concession we should bear it in mind that the law that existed prior to this budget already had provisions for the Board of Inland Revenue and the people there to waive the payment of penalties and interests.

This is not a new thing, you know. They are talking as if, in fact, this is something just conjured out of the air like from some magician's hat. The Government could have opted to utilize the provisions of various tax statutes so that the Board would behave surreptitiously, behind the scenes, exercising discretion based on national policy. Indeed, legislation is not, in fact, necessary to give effect to these concessions. So that by bringing forward this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we say, let the Parliament become involved, let the people become involved to understand that we are deliberately creating opportunities for everybody to understand that we have a lot of people who are not paying taxes and that maybe there is a better way to coerce them or to provide incentives to them. This is what the measure is all about. We could have done this in some kind of underhanded way and we did not do it. By doing that, we suffer the penalty of sitting here all afternoon listening to a chronology of farcical comments dedicated to nothing more, as I said, than pure, unadulterated propaganda.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really do not know that there is much substance in the other allegations they have made. I am looking at my notepad and I cannot see anything of substance to talk about. I want to summarize that the idea that they have raised here this afternoon, using the occasion to talk about corruption and misspending and, what I should say, fiscal squandermania and lack of interest in spending taxpayers' money prudently, the evident facts of the matter are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I might summarize to make sure that it is on the record, if one looked up the matter as an economist, as a statistician, if one looked at the matter dispassionately and objectively, if indeed their statements are the fact, if indeed they are the truth, we should have had an exchange rate that has been depreciating wildly.

We should not have had, over the last three years, a stable exchange rate. We should have had inflation exponentially increasing. We should have prices going through the roof. We should have had interest rates demonstrating quite clearly that the capital market was responding to the crowding-out phenomenon that the Member for Diego Martin Central is trying to introduce because he wants to fool people that he understands economics. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crowding-out phenomenon has—and before I get into that, you look at the roads of Trinidad and Tobago today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are talking about how this country is in

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such great pain, the throes of a great disaster, yet one could barely drive from point A to point B, anywhere in this country, for the fact that the roads are clogged with new cars and foreign-used cars and these things are being purchased with foreign exchange. People are driving them and it is not just big shots, it is not just—except if perhaps one wanted to say it is some kind of black or underground economy that is driving it.

I do not know what is their conclusion but one cannot be seeing all that and at the same time alleging in a propagandistic way that this country is in the throes of a great economic disaster. I have not discerned in the media, I have not discerned in listening to people in taxis or maxi-taxis, in Woodford Square or elsewhere, a sense of foreboding, a sense of gloom, a sense that the roof is going to cave in. People feel very buoyant. People are in a state of expectation that the good times are here and that they will continue and that more of them will get good jobs—60,000 jobs created in the last five years. That is the kind of mood in the country. People are not altogether put off by the idea that there are certain hiccups with the question of going to school in spite of the fact that some schools are not completed, and all of that.

I think if I listened to the debate, most people are concerned with the fact that the country is about coming round to the idea that even if a lot of children are, what I should say, “duncy”, this is the kind of traditional colloquialism, you know, “You are dunce. You did not get into a junior secondary; you did not get into a five-year school so you are dunce”. I think everyone, including the lowest of the low, in terms of their opportunities and their abilities, understands that even if a child did not get into a junior secondary, there are many of them who, if sent to a post-primary or a model school or helped in some kind of way, will come through. They are late developers. They had unfortunate circumstances. Many of these little girls are abused by their fathers and their uncles.

I took the opportunity, when I had the radio programme, to call them swine and I do not apologize for having so said. I say it again. I want it on the record. All the people, all the men, wherever they are, who are stuffing themselves in their daughters, they are swine, just like those people who are incited by the PNM to say that the only good thing Abu Bakr did not do was to kill Robinson. I say they are all swine. How can they say that? We live in a democracy. We are in a free society. We can vote and change our government. We are not living in Africa. We are not living in the Congo. We are not in Bolivia. How can they say that Abu Bakr should kill the Prime Minister because they do not like him? They are swine. They are dogs. They are hogs. They are hyenas. I say that. I want it on

the record that Morgan Job said that, you understand. It sends a message. Do not say these things for children to hear because when they hear that they will probably want to kill people who they do not like too, and we see the murdering going on and we know why it is going on.

As I am on that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reinforce the point I am making about how this Parliament is used for propaganda, the Member for Diego Martin West sat there, you know, heard me for my full hour and a half one evening talking about the reason and the fact that some children end up in crime and deviant behaviour was not because of their ethnicity but because of their circumstance. I caused various examples to be put into the record. I talked about Bombay and all these places and he got up after me and had the press report that the Member for Tobago East said that the only people who are committing crimes in Trinidad are the people of African descent. That is wickedness. That is nastiness, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want people to understand that.

At a time before that, there is a book of essays I wrote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where I, on sundry occasions in those essays, said very good things about the late Dr. Williams, the late Prime Minister of this country. Nobody forced me to say those things. I did not know that I would have come into Parliament here. I was saying those things based on my objective and dispassionate understanding of Dr. Williams, and he got up after me and said that I said Dr. Williams is a racist. I never said anything like that. I never said any form of words like that, but when he gets that into the record the press is going to print it, they are going to say it on Power 102 and everybody will say, "Job say Williams was a racist", "Job say this and Job say that".

That is their mission, to come here and say anything—[*Interruption*] Quiet!—and everything, spread every propaganda with the simple purpose that it will get into the media, some calypsonian will sing it and the whole North Stand will start singing it in chorus, and because they are so simple-minded, because they have been so misled, because they have been so abused for 40 years by the PNM, they believe it, like little children. That is the whole point of all that gallerying here this afternoon, to get up and say things for them to get into the press, for the calypsonians to sing it and for their Bantu stands to take it up as fact. It is only propaganda, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So having gone through all of that and having given you an explanation that this Order is not anything that the Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Diego Martin East—nothing that they said has any connection to the truth. In fact, they did not say anything

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connected to the Motion. They spent the whole afternoon talking about corruption and spreading propaganda. I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this measure is timely. It is something that we need to do at this point in our history. It is consistent with all that the Government has been doing. It is consistent with the state of the economy at the time and Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

6.05 p.m.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 15 Noes 10

AYES

Maharaj, Hon. R. L.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

Lasse, Dr. The Hon. V.

Griffith, Dr. The Hon. R.

Humphrey, Hon. J.

Sudama, Hon. T.

Rafeeq, Dr. The Hon. H.

Job, Dr. The Hon. M.

Ganga, Hon. G.

Nanan, Dr. The Hon. A.

Partap, Hon. H.

Mohammed, Dr. The Hon. R.

Singh, Hon. D.

Ramsaran, Hon. M.

Sharma, Mr. C.

NOES

Valley, K.

Manning, P.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Narine, J.

Hart, E.

James, Mrs. E.

Bereaux, H.

Joseph, M.

Williams, E.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 2000 be confirmed subject to the following modifications:

Paragraph 2 is amended:

- (a) in section 103(1) and (2) by deleting the word “15” and substituting the word “20”;
- (b) by inserting after section 103(2), the following subsection:
‘(3) The rate of interest referred to in subsections (1) and (2) shall come into effect on 1st May, 2001’;
- (c) by inserting after section 103, the following section:
‘103A(1) Notwithstanding any written law to the contrary, but subject to subsection (2), there shall be a waiver of the following liabilities:
 - (a) interest on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (b) interest charged on the payment, prior to 28th August, 2000, of taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999, where such interest has not been paid;
 - (c) penalties, further tax and additional tax incurred on outstanding taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes or business levy, as the case may be, are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;

- (d) penalties, further tax and additional tax in respect of taxes and business levy due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 and paid prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties, further tax and additional tax have not been paid;
 - (e) penalties on outstanding returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 where such returns are filed during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (f) penalties with respect to returns for years of income up to and including the year 1998 and filed prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties have not been paid.
2. For the avoidance of doubt, the waiver granted in this section shall not apply to the following:
- (a) taxes and business levy;
 - (b) interest, penalties, further tax and additional tax paid prior to 28th August, 2000.
3. Where any returns, taxes and business levy remain outstanding after 30th April, 2001, the penalties, interest, further taxes and additional taxes which would have been payable on such returns, taxes and business levy shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.
4. Paragraph 4 is amended by deleting section 54A(1) and substituting as follows:
- ‘54A(1) Notwithstanding any written law to the contrary, but subject to subsection (2), there shall be a waiver of the following liabilities:
- (a) interest on outstanding taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;
 - (b) interest charged on the payment, prior to 28th August, 2000, of taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such interest has not been paid;
 - (c) penalties and penal taxes incurred on outstanding taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 where such taxes are paid during the period 28th August, 2000 to 30th April, 2001;

- (d) penalties and penal taxes in respect of taxes due and payable as at 31st December, 1999 and paid prior to 28th August, 2000 where such penalties and penal taxes have not been paid.

(2) For the avoidance of doubt, the waiver granted in subsection (1) does not apply to the following:

- (a) taxes;
- (b) interest, penalties and penal taxes paid prior to 28th August, 2000.

(3) Where any taxes remain outstanding after 30th April, 2001, the interest, penalties and penal taxes which would have been payable on such outstanding taxes shall be revived and become payable as if the waiver in subsection (1) had not been granted.

5. The following paragraph is inserted:

“Act No. 14 1987 amended	5. The Finance Act, 1987, is amended by inserting in the Schedule in appropriate numerical position, the following number: ‘103A’
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ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday, September 20, 2000 at 1.30 p.m. Members would have got a circular stating on that date there will be a Meeting of the Finance Committee, which will be held at 1.30 p.m. Mr. Deputy Speaker, today we were supposed to do some Bills, but we will do those Bills on Wednesday, September 20, 2000 and I have mentioned it to the Opposition Chief Whip, and these are Bill No. 1, an Act to provide for licensing of bailiffs and for other related matters; Bill No. 2, an Act to amend the Patents Act, 1996; and Bill No. 3, an Act to provide for the establishment of a programme for the protection of certain witnesses and other persons; and to provide for matters incidental thereto. We shall attempt to complete two Motions under Government Business: Motion No. 1, the report on the Joint Select Committee on the working paper and reform of the management structure of Parliament and Motion No. 2, the acquisition of land.

Adjournment
[HON. R. L. MAHARAJ]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a matter by the Member for Toco/Manzanilla but he is not here.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.15 p.m.